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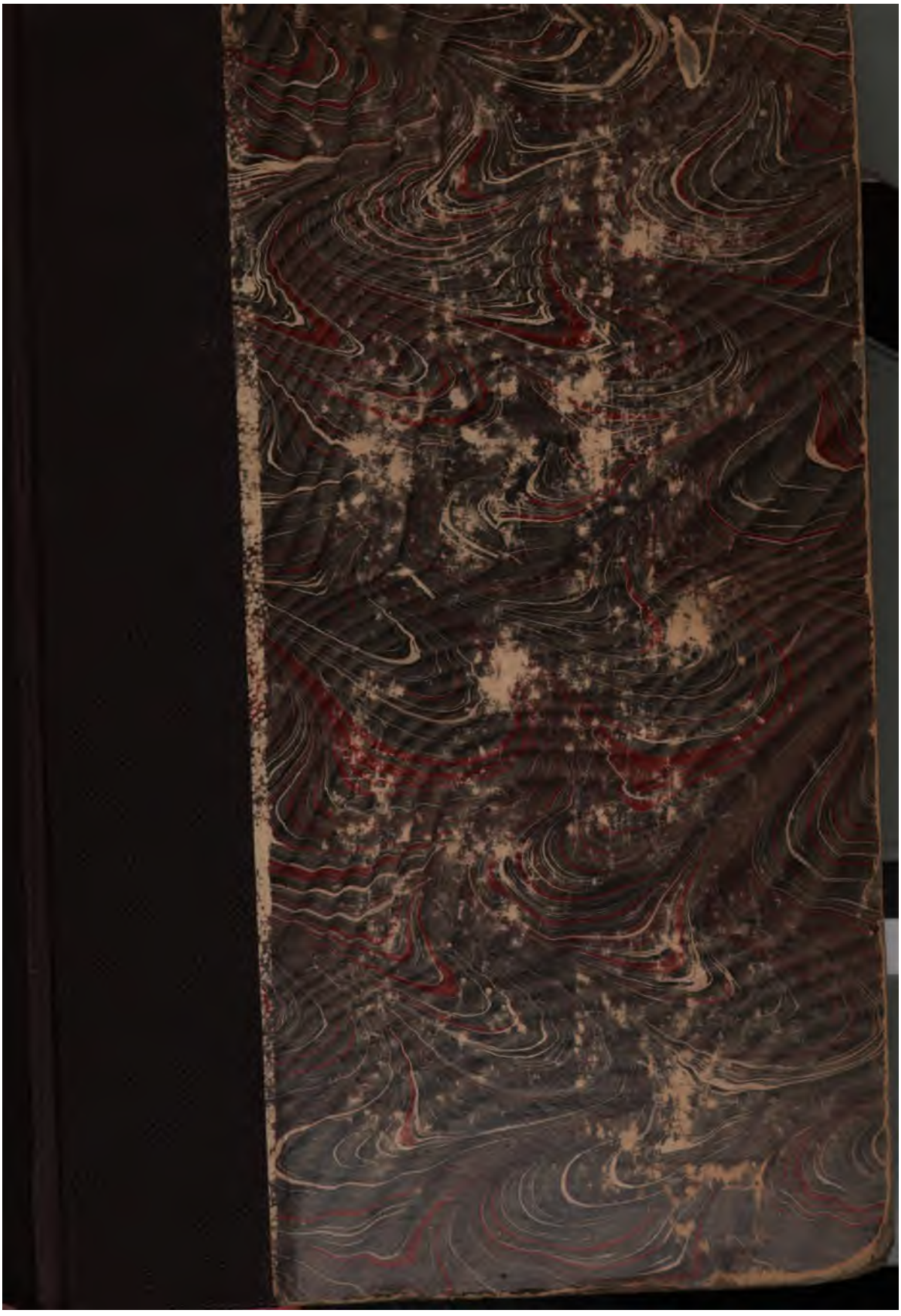

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THE

METHODIST PULPIT

SOUTH.

COMPILED BY WILLIAM T. SMITHSON.

THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE.

I cheerfully comply with the request of Mr. SMITHSON, to whose enterprise this volume is due, that I would introduce it to the public, and solicit in its favor a friendly criticism and a liberal patronage. Though the original motive of its publication was his zeal in behalf of a particular society of Methodists, or rather of Southern Methodism, as her interests are involved in the Church which represents her at the Federal Metropolis, it has been his ambition to make it a gem of art and a treasury of sacred eloquence worthy to adorn the centre-table of every parlor, to rank in the library with other models of pulpit oratory, and to descend to succeeding ages in just honor to the faithful ministry of our day. He is free to confess that he has not perfectly succeeded in realizing the harmony and completeness of his design; and he pleads as his apology for any defect, the haste in which it was necessarily got up, and his inexperience in book-making. He had expected the volume to be of larger size; and he greatly regrets that every Conference in our connection has not been represented, and that in a few instances he has not secured engravings of the authors. But I have all confidence that there will be no dissent among its generous patrons from the estimate I set upon it, in pronouncing it to be worth far more than it costs, and to reflect credit both on him and on the whole Church. The number and style of the engravings enhance greatly the expense of the book to him, and its value to the subscriber. A considerable circulation will be required to cover that single item. The sermons, with a few exceptions, whose special interest or limited circulation justified republication, have never been printed before; they constitute a valuable contribution to this species of literature, as well as a fair exponent of a pulpit which rates in reputation for eloquence and efficiency below none other in our land. The Methodists of the South will not fail to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to

Mr. SMITHSON for reproducing in a permanent form the sermon of our venerable father, BISHOP SOULE, which had such celebrity more than a quarter of a century ago. We had fondly hoped to obtain from him, though by the pen of an amanuensis, a legacy of counsel and encouragement to the Church he has so long served, and from whom he must soon separate: by the infirmities of disease, added to those of age, denied us the boon. It is a timely work to present to the public now an accurate engraving of that majestic but benignant face, on which the vast majority of us cannot hereafter look, and a discourse, the product of his prime and the admiration of our fathers, by which, even when dead, he will yet speak. There will also be an unanimous approval of the perpetuation of the noble discourse preached by BISHOP PIERCE on the death of BISHOP CAPERS, as a tribute to one whose saintly spirit, silvery eloquence, and abundant labors will not soon be forgotten, and as a masterpiece of a living orator who deserved to be his associate in the high office of the Episcopacy. With the exception of the writer, who owes his place among the great men of our Israel to the accident of his present pastoral relation to the Church for whose benefit this work was projected, the contributors have been chosen because of their eminence in their respective sections, and far beyond. Their names are "familiar as household words" throughout the South, and guaranty the amplest success to the volume. Their sermons, aided by the most correct and elegant likenesses which art could produce, will bring before the minds of vast numbers who have listened with delight and profit to their preaching, the living men and the living voices. Those who know them only by the fame of their virtues, their talents and labors, will rejoice to see their faces in these faithful engravings, and to read at leisure the printed words which, as they came from the lips and the warm heart, were clothed with so much spiritual power. The next generation will gladly learn in these pages something more about the men whose praise was a favorite theme with their fathers.

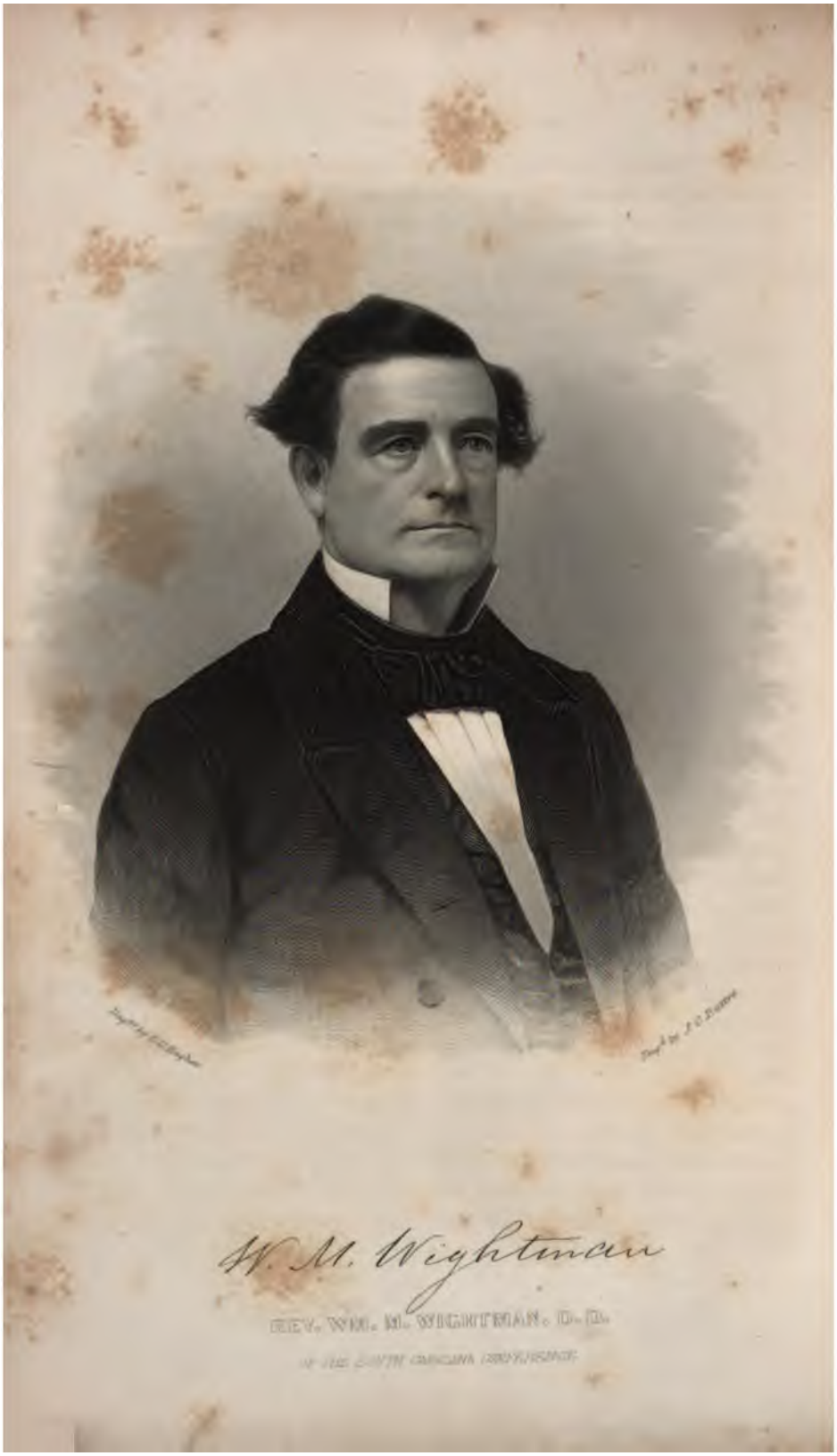
The name of WILLIAM T. SMITHSON has been prominently before the public in connection with this and other enterprises to establish in prosperity and permanence the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at the Capital of the Union. In former years, as a member of the flourishing Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, he pursued the even tenor of his duties with a liberal, consistent, and working devotion to all her interests; but

then he was at liberty to indulge the modest, quiet, and retiring disposition so characteristic of him, without detriment to the cause of Christ, which was then, as it still is, dear to his heart. Since his removal to this city, peculiar circumstances have called forth more remarkable displays of whole-souled generosity and untiring energy, in behalf of the church to which he has ever shown himself a true son. His zeal has been no partizan heat against any body of Christians, but a pure affection for the church with which he is identified by every tie of birth, education, faith, and communion. Here had been planted, in a soil and climate which seemed ungenial, a feeble society in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He and others of like spirit have watched with solicitude and nursed with care this little slip, struggling doubtfully for existence. He saw that if a neat, commodious, and accessible place of worship could be procured, it would attract in future the numerous Methodists who should move to the Metropolis from all parts of the South—a class who had been heretofore lost to us, either by joining the societies under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore Conference, or by straggling off from their mother to other denominations, or by relapsing into the world—a course to which alas! strangers moving to this city of fashion and dissipation are too prone. The chief obstacle to the realization of this bright vision has been the smallness and poverty of our membership, and the consequent lack of funds to place themselves in a condition which would not only keep them alive, but attract to them the attention of the public interested in their welfare, during the period necessary for the operation of the causes already indicated. A debt has been incurred in the partial fulfilment of this object; and I am happy to state, as I can with certainty, that the increase in members, congregation, and all other elements of success which had been anticipated, has already begun, and progressed to a cheering degree. I may call the present year one of prosperity in numbers, finances, and usefulness. The fragile slip lives, grows, is destined to flourish and be fruitful. This volume is one of a series of efforts to raise the money which the members really have not the ability to pay, though they have the heart. Every purchaser will have the satisfaction to know that he is aiding a needy church, and is also doing a service of no small value to the whole extent of Southern Methodism, by arising her standard aloft at the Capital of our country, and by providing church privileges for the sons of every Southern State who shall flock

hither with their families to fill various offices, from clerkships in the different departments of Government, to seats in the Cabinet, the Senate and House of Representatives, and it may be to the Chief Magistracy of the Union.

JOHN C. GRANBERY.

WASHINGTON, *November*, 1858.



W. M. Wightman

REV. WM. M. WIGHTMAN, D. D.

OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE.

SERMONS.

HEAVENLY TREASURES CONTRASTED WITH EARTHLY

BY WM. M. WIGHTMAN, D. D.,
PRESIDENT OF WOFFORD COLLEGE.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—Matt. vi, 19-21.

This passage is taken from our Lord's sermon on the mount—a sermon of important texts, as it has been happily described—a sermon, of which the preacher is the Word and Wisdom of God; every sentiment of which is as practical and adapted to daily life, as it is weighty and clad with the authority of a teacher sent directly from God. The subject which is thus brought to our attention contains the highest wisdom, and involves the duty and happiness of time, the destiny of eternity.

The text presents a contrast between earthly treasures and heavenly; it presses an earnest warning against the seductions of the one, and an equally earnest direction to secure the other. The spirit of the passage is, that spiritual and heavenly things are, and ought to be considered, the great objects of pursuit to man, since they alone are imperishable, satisfying, and worthy of the ambition of an immortal mind.

The terms in which the great lesson of the text is delivered, are to be interpreted with the scope, intention, and limitations, furnished by the whole revelation of Divine Truth. Thus, the injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," is not to be understood as a peremptory prohibition against all prudent foresight for

future wants—against all accumulation of property, with whatever intention; but the expression means, according to the Hebrew idiom, that we should prefer heavenly to earthly treasures—should seek them first and foremost—as of a value and importance infinitely higher. Thus, further on, the great Teacher bids us take no thought for the morrow; evidently, from the whole scope of the discourse, meaning no *anxious* thought—the precept lying not against forethought altogether, (one of the noblest attributes of human intelligence)—but against all such carking care for the morrow as a distrust of the Divine Providence would beget, and which would be fatal to settled peace of mind.

It is undeniable that the present life has its claims—subordinate, certainly, to the higher claims of the life to come, yet in their measure real and substantial, and demanding our serious regard. Nay, these subordinate interests are themselves included in the covenant grant of the gospel, and made matters of specific promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Whilst therefore the injunction of the text does not oppose a proper attention to the temporary interests of human life, it may be understood to lie against the hoarding up of *useless* wealth. Absurd as such a procedure is, it often happens that money is accumulated solely for its own sake, and without any respect to its uses and advantages. The insane passion of the miser who starves in his wretched garret that he may add to his gains, is only an extreme illustration of a tendency too often witnessed. Even large wealth may be so held as to confer no benefit upon its possessor or the world. Instead of being regarded as an important talent committed to us to be wisely and generously used, it may be looked upon as absolutely our own, and hoarded up as though God and the world had no right to demand at our hands a religious employment of it—no poor man may be relieved, no benevolent institution fostered, no religious interest served by it. Riches may become not our servants, but our masters. We may surrender ourselves to the domination of the sordid lust of gain, sacrifice conscience and duty to God in this wretched servitude, and glory in the gilded badges of our slavery. Obviously, "no man can serve God and Mammon."

Furthermore, the spirit of the precept here delivered by our Lord implies that the acquisition of property is not to be matter of *anxiety* to us, so as to prevent our contentment with the lot in life in which

Providence has placed us, or our constant dependence on God. We hold that it is every man's privilege to endeavor to better his circumstances. This may be attempted in a spirit of discontent, of murmuring and repining at our present condition; or it may be done in a far different spirit, and in due submission to the Divine will. While the latter is both lawful and commendable, the former course is interdicted, and carries its condemnation in its face.

We hardly need to add, that the precept before us prohibits the accumulation of property for unworthy and sinful ends. Whenever it is an object of ardent desire and eager pursuit, that it may foster our pride, pamper luxurious tastes, minister to sinful pleasures, encourage effeminacy, or dissolve our energies in indolent repose, then at once the motive desecrates the pursuit. Sought for such ends, wealth becomes an unmitigated curse to the soul.

The lesson taught us in the text is the vast superiority of heavenly treasures over earthly; and the emphatic exhortation given us is to lay up the former rather than the latter. This superiority is exhibited in the following particulars: 1. Their incorruptibility; 2. Their security; 3. Their suitableness to the spiritual, immortal nature of man. Then the exhortation is enforced by the considerations—1. Of the susceptibility of augmentation in the case of heavenly treasures; and, 2. Of the invariable connection between our affections and our treasures.

In general terms, treasure may be defined as provision for the future. What instinct supplies to the bee and the ant, reason and experience teach man. The fact that our necessities require daily supplies, suggests the propriety of anticipating to-day the wants of to-morrow, and providing to meet them as they come. Even in a state of semi-savageism, the Indian of the prairies learns that winter will come, when his supplies from the chase must cease, and that corn should be planted in the spring to furnish him with food, when other resources fail. Earthly treasures, particularly among ancient Oriental nations, consisted of stores of corn, wine, and oil; of ample wardrobes of rich and costly garments; of numerous flocks and herds; of gems and precious stones; of silver and golden vessels. In modern times, earthly treasures are composed of landed estates, splendid mansions, elegant furniture, galleries of art, cellars stocked with wines, stables filled with horses, ample revenues from fixed capital, and the like.

"Heavenly treasures" is an expression meant to mark and set forth the resources and reversionary interests of an immortal spirit, brought into possession of the favor of God, created anew in the Divine image, and made graciously an heir of the promises of the gospel in Christ Jesus. These may be summed up in the riches of grace for the life that now is, and the riches of glory in the life which is to come. They are, of course, spiritual, satisfying, immortal.

These two are contrasted in the text. The superiority of heavenly treasures is seen, first, in their *incorruptibility*. Earthly treasures, in their ancient form, were emphatically corruptible. The stores of corn, wine, and oil, were perishable. Their rich wardrobes, their costly fabrics of silk and wool, were proverbially the prey of the moth and mildew. The corrosions of rust affected their precious metals. If modern treasures seem to claim an exemption from the rapid processes of natural decay, they nevertheless are subject in the long run to the same law of decay. The towered castle, which a few generations ago seemed to stand in monumental grandeur, defying the tooth of time, falls ultimately into ruin; the lichens and ivy grow in the widening crevices of its walls; the gradual inroads of heat and moisture, of wind and rain, are all the while corroding battlemented turrets, iron-ribbed gates, granite foundations. A few hundred years will suffice to lay low the proudest structures of wealth and ambition.

How stands the case with heavenly treasures? They are intellectual, consequently of the essence of mind itself; spiritual, and resist the law of decay which attaches to material substances; immortal and eternal as the God whose favor, attributes, glory, and heaven, constitute part and parcel of them. War, famine, fire, sword, revolution, and whatever else may be found to alienate earthly possessions, cannot touch these heavenly treasures. They enter into the constitution of the mind itself, and defy the point of the sword, the engines of torture, the inquisitor's faggot, the executioner's axe, the decay of the body, the very grave itself. So far, then, as corruptibility is concerned, there may be contrast,—there can be no comparison.

Or, secondly, if we look at the *security* of each, the same conclusion is inevitable. In addition to an inherent principle of decay, earthly treasures are proverbially insecure. What is spared by gradual waste, may be seized by sudden violence. The estate may remain in its loveliness of wood and water, of mansion, garden, and

field; but some unlooked-for civil commotion may pluck it from our hands, and turn us out of its possession. Lightning may rend ancestral halls; the incendiary's fires may leave the palace a blackened ruin. Or, if we overlook fortuitous visitations of calamity; if we suppose that no commercial convulsions shall shake the securities on which we lean,—no popular tumult overturn the established foundations of property, and send us adrift upon a sea covered with the wrecks of fortune; yet at least, it is the inevitable doom that we must ourselves, ere long, leave all earthly possessions behind. Let the man of wealth multiply his precautions. I care not if he be a monarch, and can post an army around his palace. Disease laughs at the glittering array of his guards; walks with unceremonious front along his corridors, across his portals, into his embroidered chamber, indifferent to its robes of state, and its Arabian perfumes. Death, who cannot be bribed by the gold of an empire, challenges his victim. Like the meanest serf, the throned king must heed, must obey that summons. Every man that lives and breathes must reckon on such a visitation. *Then* where is the rich man's wealth? Can he carry his millions into the eternal state? Will his bonds and stocks, his landed property, his merchant-ships with Eastern cargoes—will any of these be available to him in that dread futurity which is his eternal lot? So far as earthly treasures are concerned, what is the difference between the soul of a rich man and of a beggar, a moment after death? Can you tell, as each takes its flight to its eternal destination, which was fortune's favorite, and which has just left its garret and its rags? Tell me not, then, of treasures held by so frail a tenure, and which, sooner or later, by an inevitable destiny, will desert us!

Contemplate, on the other hand, heavenly treasures, especially in connection with the close of life. Down to the meeting-place between eternity and time, the treasures of earth may follow us; but *there* they fail us. A winding-sheet and six feet of earth is all that remains of hoarded millions. How different is the case in respect to the treasures of the soul! Death shall sooner quench the dimless ray of intellect, and dissolve the indestructible essence of mind, and annihilate the grave-defying soul of man, than touch the inward peace, the calm serenity, the assured faith in the Redeemer, the mounting hope, the heaven-kindled love, the far-flying joy, in which are found the true treasures of the gracious soul. Let the body die!

Let the last expiring struggle give the signal of sorrow to those who have hung with speechless anxiety over the couch of sickness. Carry to the grave, and to cold oblivion, the frail vehicle in which the spirit has passed its earthly sojourn. Death but sets the spirit free; and with its indestructible treasures that spirit hastens to its endless home in the heavenly country, in the eternal city of God!

Thirdly. We may try the case by considering the relative suitableness of earthly and heavenly treasures to the wants of man. And here it is admitted that earthly treasures, to some extent, do minister to the necessities of the present life. Man lives, in part at least, by bread. So long as his daily labor suffices to procure what is necessary to sustain life and give vigor to health, he is to a large extent independent of wealth. Nevertheless, sickness may wither the muscular arm and bend the stout frame. It is desirable that some provision should be made for age, infirmity, the education of children, and general usefulness in the world. Be it so. Yet, after all, it remains true that

> "Man wants but little here below,
> Nor wants that little long."

Over and beyond the amount of property needful for this, and leaving out of consideration a christian use of riches, it is maintained that wealth in itself has no property to satisfy the inner cravings of the soul. The rich man thinks he can afford to keep a luxurious table. Be it so. Let the ends of the earth be put under contribution to minister to his palate. After all, he can eat but three times a day—at most, four; and each time only a given quantity; if he goes beyond that, dyspepsia and gout are the penalty. His cellar may be stocked with the wines of Italy, Spain, and the Rhine: he can drink but his single bottle at his dinner. His hard-working neighbor goes to his homely fare with an edge of appetite vastly keener, and enjoys his frugal meal with a relish as exquisite as the millionaire. Hunger is the best sauce, and a good digestion obviates all necessity for a French cook. The poor man sits at his humble board with his little family; the rich gourmand invites company—in most cases, a set of mere parasites. His saloons are opened to a gay crowd of triflers, and music and dancing, silly flirtation or ill-dissembled licentiousness, while away the tedious hours. Allow that all this did actually satisfy the soul, why, the tranquil pleasures of a quiet family fireside do the same. The rich man pays his thousand

dollars for his night's dissipation, and tells you he has enjoyed himself; the other pays nothing, and enjoys himself fully as much, without the fuming and flurry of spirits beforehand, and perchance the vexation, headache, and touches of remorse, afterwards. How is the one any better off, so far as satisfaction is concerned, than the other?

The case would be different, we admit, if wealth could buy peace of mind, genius, beauty, learning, wit, or even love. But none of these are marketable qualities; they are not to be commanded by money. No, nor even exemption from sickness, much less the approach of death. The man of wealth may change his locality at will. He may cross seas, scale mountains, visit watering-places; but he cannot get away from *himself;* he cannot escape the tedium of a listless mind, the weariness of a sated palate, and a heart ill at ease. And for the rest, he breathes nothing better than the common air which expands the lungs of the meanest slave; he cannot appropriate to himself heaven's sunshine—free to all; the very same sky expands over the poor; its "majestical canopy fretted with golden fire," its sunset draperies, its gorgeous cloud-pictures, are spread out to the eye of the poor and the rich alike.

But behold, how deep, how vast, are the real wants of a soul immaterial. That man was emphatically a fool, who said to his soul—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!" Can any of the combinations of material, gross, outward things satisfy the pinings of a spirit made in the image of God, and fill the abysmal depths of its capacities? It must occasionally speculate upon its origin and destiny. It must ever and anon revolve the awful problems of life and death, of time and eternity, moral probation and endless retribution. In quest of an adequate and self-satisfying enjoyment, it must often ask the question, "Who will show us any good?" Conscious of guilt, it must inquire, "How can a man be just with God?" What the soul wants is knowledge—truth, especially of a moral and spiritual kind. Its vigor comes from an enlightened, well-working conscience. Its wealth is not that vulgar thing which is reckoned in pounds sterling. Its property is cultivated moral sentiment, purified affections, high and holy communion with God and goodness. To make it rich, you must make it partaker of the provisions of mercy and grace in the gospel. It must find an interest in the favor of God through faith in the sacrifice of the redeeming Son. It must have a well-grounded

and clearly ascertained consciousness of this favor. Then it possesses the peace which passeth understanding. Its satisfactions are all from within, and therefore independent of outward circumstances. Its joy is the exultant glow of a spirit in vital communion with the Supreme goodness, truth, and holiness; and it moves on in a path of brightening improvement—of jubilant progress—towards an endless home in Heaven, the glorious goal of its aspirations and efforts. These are the treasures which the gracious soul finds in the gospel, and finding is satisfied, and rejoices and is glad all the days of its earthly pilgrimage.

But, besides: the soul is *immortal*. Its conscious existence outruns the brief limits of its probationary term on earth; survives the stroke of death which dissolves the body; and sweeps onward around the orbit of a measureless eternity.

> "The spirit shall return to Him
> Who gave the heavenly spark;
> Yet think not, Sun, it shall be dim,
> When thou thyself art dark."

Long after the transitory things of earth are passed away and forgotten, it shall remain young, fresh, hale, in the earlier stages of its immortal career. Nothing deserves the name of treasure—provision for the future—which does not embrace immortality, and take in, as the main element of its reckoning, the eternal destination of the soul. How strikingly does St. Peter describe, though in negative terms, the reversionary wealth of those who are "begotten again"—as "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens." Their crown is "a crown of life;" their glory, "a far, more, exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Earthly treasures, on the other hand, considered not in the light of talents to be used for the glory of God and the good of man—rested in as sources of enjoyment,—trusted to as a means of meeting future necessities,—fail, as a matter of course, to answer the wants of our immortal nature. They are of the earth, earthy; they perish in the using; or we fly away and leave them forever. "I have seen minute-glasses," says one of the old men eloquent of the 17th century,—"glasses so short-lived. If I were to preach upon this text, to such a glass, it were enough for half the sermon; enough to show the worldly man his treasure and the object of his heart, to call his eye to that minute-glass, and to tell him, there flows, there flies your

treasure, and your heart with it. But if I had a secular glass, a glass that would run an age: if the two hemispheres of the world were composed in the form of such a glass, and all the world calcined and burnt to ashes, and all the ashes and sands and atoms of the world put into that glass, it would not be enough to tell the good man what his treasure and the object of his heart is."

"Lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven." There is, finally, an exhortation addressed to us on the basis of the foregoing considerations, to lay up heavenly treasures. And how strong is the appeal when the incorruptibility, security, and satisfying nature of these are considered. It is worth our while to make accumulations, if these may be depended on. We spend not our strength for nought. We labor with animating encouragement when we are sure that our labor tells with certain effect upon ultimate success. There is a strong instinct in the human bosom which prompts us to acquisition; which seeks for property; which goes out after a possession we can call our own; which can be added to and increased by daily or yearly accumulations. This instinct is most commonly turned into earthly channels, and expends its energies upon earthly objects. Christianity comes to refine, expand, ennoble it. It shows us durable riches:

> "Riches above what earth can give,
> And lasting as the mind"

We are exhorted to add; to give all diligence to add. Abundance is attainable. Ampler wealth, vaster resources, enlarged opulence, incite our ambition and stir our laggard pulses.

Is it of the nature of treasure to multiply? Then lay up treasures in heaven. He that had received five talents went and traded with them, and made them five talents more. "Lay up," by visiting the sick, and ministering to the wants of the destitute. "Lay up," by taking God's cause to heart. "Lay up," by taking God's cause in hand. "Lay up," by resisting a temptation, by acquiring or strengthening a virtue. Do you possess earthly treasures? Tremble at your danger; for "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." Avert that danger by taking heed to the Apostolic injunction: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute,

willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Are you poor? "Godliness with contentment is great gain." What is time to eternity? "If a son, then an heir; an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ." Well may you be content, with such a destiny before you. Be rich in faith. Cherish the patience of hope. Your earthly capital may be small, and your accumulations may correspond. It matters little: your spiritual capital—your soul-treasure, is the main thing. Industry, activity, consecration to God—what accumulations will they not secure! Let shame flush our cheek when we see men of the world in pursuit of gold: toiling by day, scheming by night, diverted from their object by no obstacle, alarmed by no danger, periling health, reputation, life itself, that they may lay up earthly treasures. We profess to put a right estimate upon these, in contrast with heavenly treasures; and yet how is *our* lagging zeal put to the blush, our feeble endeavors shamed, by the example. Lay up, lay up heavenly treasures! Dwarf not your expectations to the mean ambition of merely escaping hell—of reaching Heaven, so to speak, by shipwreck. Go for an ovation; more still, for a conqueror's *triumph!* Covet an abundant entrance. Aspire to a crown. Win a palace. All Heaven smiles on aspirations like these. Jesus himself bids you *lay up*. Build your accumulations higher, and higher still. Shine out, O, City of God, with jeweled gates and golden walls and streets! Attract us by the vision of thy loveliness, win us by the melody of thine anthems! Thou art our true and proper *home;* where else should be our treasures?

The exhortation of our Lord, in the text, finds its closing consideration in the fact, that where our treasure is there will our heart be also. Now, nothing is more certain than that God claims our heart. The first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This law is paramount. It lies against that subtle idolatry which is so often paid to wealth. No shrine may be set up; no pageantry of outward worship may mark the devotee. He may not bend the knee before an idol, the symbol of the divinity which rules his heart; and yet the homage may be profound as the depths of the soul. We have only to ask what subject engrosses the thoughts, and possesses the greatest attraction for us. We recoil from the

grosser forms of idolatry; and yet wealth may as effectually dethrone the supreme God, usurp the ascendency over us, and constitute for us the great good of life, as though we considered the exchange a temple of worship, our ledgers sacred books written in cabalistic letters, and the various investments of money the household gods to which the homage of profound trust and daily devotion was due. Our attention, our delight, our confidence, may all be transferred from the Creator, blessed forever, to the creature. Satisfied with the stream we may forget the fountain; engrossed with the augmentation of worldly resources, we may become blind to the primary, originating source of whatever is desirable on earth. Thus, to love the world so as to make it practically our great good, to trust in riches, is to deny the God that is above. Here then we are brought to a solemn pause. We must choose the one or the other; God or the world; heavenly or earthly treasures.

Oh, for that faith which is the evidence of things unseen!—which, passing through the shadowy phantoms of the present and the visible, grasps the eternal substance. That alone which is solid, substantial, abiding, is worthy of the heart of man; fills its ideas and its hopes; realizes its expectations, and exhausts its capacities of enjoyment.

"Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Amen.

LABOR AND REST.

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"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption."—Acts xiii, 36.

"God seeth not as man seeth, nor judgeth as man judgeth." Very different, often, from ours, is his estimate, even of the same persons and the same actions. The reason is, that "man judgeth according to the appearance, but God looketh upon the heart." He sees through what is outward and accidental, and discerns clearly what is inward and essential. He disregards mere external forms and aspects, and values all things according to their real and intrinsic qualities. Men judge the motive by the act; God judges the act by the motive.

It is our true wisdom, to unlearn our own method, and learn the method of God. But this is a wisdom which we are little inclined to seek. Naturally, we are averse to it; and if by grace we ever acquire it, it is ordinarily with great difficulty, and by slow degrees. It is no easy task to climb the mountain, whence we may look down upon the world, with all that it contains, and behold it as it is. Death, however, will place us instantly upon the summit; and the panorama of all terrestrial things, in all their relations and influences, will lie around and beneath us. Then the cloud will be lifted from the landscape, the veil will be rent that intercepts our vision, and all false lights will be extinguished, and all distorting media will be removed, and gold will cease to charm, and fame will cease to allure, and the vain pomp and unsubstantial pageantry of earth will lose their bewildering splendors, and we shall see things as God sees them, and estimate them by the same perfect standard. Even now—such is the wise and gracious arrangement of our Heavenly Father—every season of affliction, every disappointment of our hopes, every sickness which brings us near the verge of life, every bereavement which throws over us the shadow of death, forces us to anticipate that judgment and those feelings which the last great change shall fix unalterably and forever.

Oh! it is a dreadful thing, to learn too late the true aim and issue of our being. Let us endeavor to learn it now, while repentance is hopeful, and Mercy waits for Wisdom. Let us compare our own erring views with the revealed views of God, and correct the former by the latter; and live not for the shadow, but for the substance—not for the transitory, but for the eternal. So shall the morning mists of delusion melt away before the risen sun of truth and righteousness; and the great day of trial shall develop in us, however regarded now by the ignorant and ungodly, a wisdom as much superior to the wisdom of this world, as heaven is to earth, or immortality to time.

The text remarkably exemplifies the difference of which we have spoken—the difference between God's view and man's view, both of life and of death. It is God's account of the life and the death of David—the true object of the one, the real nature of the other. How different would have been man's account of both. Man's account of David's life would have spoken of his heroism, his magnanimity, his poetic genius, and his royal policy; and man's account of David's death would have treated of the state in which he left his family and his kingdom, the profound grief of his children and his subjects, the pomp of his funereal pageant, and the immortal fame of his virtues. On the contrary, God's account of his servant's life develops the inward motive and principle of his conduct—the two great elements of charity and piety which formed his noble character—he "served his own generation by the will of God;" and God's account of his servant's death relates only to what is real and personal in that event—the saint's release from labor, the man's return to dust,—he "fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption."

Here is *the true aim of life;* and here is *the proper view of death.* May we learn to estimate both by this divine standard; and may the testimony hereafter be borne of us, which is thus borne of David. This, substantially, must be the record, or the contrary must be the record—either, that we lived a useful life, and died a peaceful death; or, that we lived solely to ourselves, and died utterly without hope. There is no medium character; there is no medium destiny; nor can the idler in the market hope to share with the laborer in the vineyard. Let us carry this thought along with us, while we proceed to consider,—

I. *The True Aim of Life.*

Man's natural view of it, as we have already remarked, is very different from God's. He regards himself as sent hither to grasp and to enjoy as much as he can of the world—as much as he can of its riches, as much as he can of its pleasures, as much as he can of its honors, as much as he can of its science; and if anything compels him to remember that these things are uncertain and transitory, he only pursues them the more eagerly, or clings to them the more tenaciously, for the conviction; making the most of the short and fleeting hour for acquiring them, and in the hurry of its occupation forgetting the deceitful and unsatisfying nature of the acquisition. Many live as if this world were made merely for themselves—as if it were the only world, and they its only occupants; and all the discipline of Providence—the winds of adverse fortune, the thwarted plans and blighted hopes, which make up the experience of worldly men—can never induce them to act upon any other view of the great end of life. It may make them modify their plans, or change the particular objects of pursuit, or despair of finding satisfaction in any attainment; but it will never alter the selfishness of their motives, and the sensuousness of their aims—it will never hinder them from looking to themselves, and to the world around them, and to their own personal command of a portion of what the world contains, as the chief source of their happiness. There is something in man, stronger than reason, and stronger than prudence, and stronger than conscience, which will make us live for ourselves—for the poor joys and petty interests of earth and time—regardless of heaven and eternity—till God visits the soul with the powerful illuminations of his truth, and the gracious influence of his Holy Spirit. Then, in this new light which beams upon the understanding, this new life which quickens the slumbering conscience, this incipient renovation of the moral man, we begin to see the present as God sees it—in its relation to the everlasting future, and enter into his own estimate of the true aim of life. Then we learn to look upon the chief object of our being as consisting, not in seeking our own interests, or gratifying our own inclinations, or building the monuments of our own fame, or furnishing our own intellectual capacities; but simply in serving our own generation by the will of God—reflecting, as mirrors, the light which has been shed upon our souls—dispensing, as almoners, the bounty which has been placed in our hands—distributing to a suffering and famishing race

the living bread rained upon us from heaven, and the living water gushing for us from the smitten rock; nor daring, upon the peril of our immortality, to monopolize the manna, or seal up the fountain. Then we learn to regard ourselves, not as isolated and independent existences, without any responsible relations to the universe or its Author; but as members of the great human family, all mankind our brethren, and God the father of us all. Then we learn to appreciate the position and the work assigned us for the benefit of those whose nature we partake and whose redemption we share. Then we learn to "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Then we learn to "seek not our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Then we learn to "do good as we have opportunity unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith." Then we learn to trace his blessed footsteps, of whom, as our example—the incarnation of virtue—it is recorded, that he "went about doing good."

Such are the promptings of grace. And they are seconded by the voice of nature. Does anything in the universe exist solely for itself? Why shines the sun, or beams the star? Why blows the wind, or falls the rain? Why blooms the rose, or waves the corn? Why spreads the meadow, or towers the forest? Why glides the river, or heaves the ocean? Why trills the mellow-throated thrush his anthem, or sings the morning lark his merry roundelay? Why travels the globe in its eternal circuit, or envelops its broad convexity the all-pervading atmosphere? Why wings the angel his luminous way down the empyrean, or tabernacles among us, in suffering flesh, the very God of angels? It is all for the benefit of others—for the benefit of man—to sustain and bless his being, render him a blessing to his race, and conduct him to blessedness eternal. And shall man, thus ministered to by all the creation, and by the very Lord of creation—shall man, wrapped up in himself, and all unmindful of his brethren—be the solitary exception—an anomaly in the universe?

And does not our social constitution corroborate the preaching of universal nature? What mean these mutual attractions and interests—these relations of sympathy and dependence—which prevail among mankind? Why are we constituted social beings, endowed with social faculties and affections? Why are we so made as to be necessary to one another's happiness—even to one another's subsistence? Why have we the power of speech, and the gift of reason,

and such means of influence, and such facilities of persuasion? Why are we linked together in families and communities, instead of being dispersed in cold isolation and desolate solitariness over the face of the earth? Why were we not created incapable of communicating our thoughts and feelings one to another, or without any of those sweet drawings of the heart which we experience toward our kindred and our kind? Is not the whole social arrangement an ordinance of God, and does it not indicate his will that we should serve our own generation?

And this view of the proper aim of life is confirmed by our continuance on earth after our preparation for heaven. Are we justified and regenerate? In our justification we received a gracious title to heaven, and in our regeneration we received an incipient meetness for heaven. Why were we not immediately removed to the celestial mansions? Does not our Heavenly Father love us enough to desire the completion of our happiness? Is it not the end of his whole gracious economy to "bring many sons to glory?" Why, then, does he leave us in the world, when we are not of it; when we are in danger from it; when we are despised and hated by it; when our entire sojourn amid its changeful scenes can be nothing better than a pilgrimage of tribulation and of tears? "Poor wanderers of a stormy day!" why does he not transfer you at once to a place of perfect security and blessedness? Look around you for an answer. What see you? Ignorance to be instructed, errors to be corrected, vices to be reformed, virtues to be confirmed, sorrows to be soothed, burdens to be lightened, broken hearts to be healed, suffering saints to be comforted, and sinners to be led to the Lamb of God. This is your appropriate work; and you are left on earth for a season, (though God would have you in heaven, and intends ultimately to bring you thither,) that you may serve your own generation.

But this *service of charity* is to be qualified by a *motive of piety.* We are not to lose ourselves in vague conjectures of duty, or selfish views of benevolence. The standard is erected; the method is prescribed—it is "the will of God." The work is neither self-chosen nor self-regulated; it is subject to the Divine appointment and the Divine control. We are to benefit mankind by doing the precise work which God has given us to do, in the exact manner which he has prescribed for doing it. So that in serving our generation, we also serve God. We serve our generation subordinately, God supremely.

And God has different work for his several servants—different spheres of action and of influence. In the church, some are to serve in the ministry of the Word, and others in inferior offices; some to feed the flock of God, and others to supply the temporal needs of the shepherd; some (like Moses) to pray upon the mountain, and others (like Aaron and Hur) to hold up the suppliant's hands; this one being "set for the defence of the gospel," and that one for the government of the church; this for the edification of saints, and that for the admonition of sinners; this for binding up the broken heart of penitence, and that for cheering the departing soul "through the valley of the shadow of death." Others are to operate in far different spheres and relations—in civil and municipal affairs, and the common business of life: one as the advocate, another as the judge; one as the physician, another as the teacher; one as the mechanic, another as the merchant; one as the philosopher, another as the laborer; one as the tiller of the soil, another as the plower of the seas; one as the pioneer of discovery, another as the oracle of state; one as the guardian of our liberties, another as the administrator of our laws. But in these several positions and activities we are to be governed by a supreme regard for the will of God. We may not choose our own calling without reference to the Divine designation, nor direct ourselves in its prosecution without seeking the guidance of a Heavenly Wisdom. And in all our relations we are to "let our light shine before men, so that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." By a consistent and holy example we are to be constant witnesses for God—our lives a perpetual testimony to the truth, a hymn of praise to the Redeemer, a reproof to the ungodly, an encouragement to the pious, and a source of instruction to all.

And perhaps we are often as useful in suffering as in laboring. Christ accomplished no less for the good of others and the glory of God when he was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, than when he traversed the hills and plains of Judea destroying the works of the devil; no less when he delivered himself up as a lamb for the slaughter, than when he magnified his mighty prerogatives as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" no less in the Garden and on the Cross, than by the evacuation of the tomb and the return to heaven. And so his servants are often most efficient when they appear most passive—doing most for their Master's cause when they

different is it to the saint and the sinner—very different in its aspects —very different in its issues. In the remarks which follow, we refer only to the death of those who serve their own generation by the will of God, for to such only comes the last great change with the calmness and security of a sleep.

God's view of death does not teach us to regard it as *the end of our existence.* He who sleeps still lives. There is a suspension of his voluntary activities, but no cessation of the vital functions. It is only the body that sleeps; the soul is ever wakeful. The body sleeps because it is weary, and needs refreshment; the soul knows no fatigue, and demands no repose. We say the mind flags, or the spirit faints; but we speak unphilosophically. The material organism, through which the soul acts upon the external world, may tire and halt; the soul itself, not subject to physical laws, remains always vigorous and active. Sleep, then, is only the state of the outer man; who can say that death is anything more—that it affects the thinking, conscious soul—that it produces any change, except in the mere mode and circumstances of our being?

True, we see not the unbodied soul. What then? There are a thousand other things that we have never seen, though we readily admit their existence. Some of these are the most pervading and the most powerful agencies in nature. What say you of air, caloric, electricity? Do you doubt their existence because you do not see them? And why doubt the continued existence of the soul because, separate from the body, it is invisible? It is invisible now, in connection with the body; and if you infer its future non-existence because it is then invisible, you should infer its present non-existence because it is now invisible. The argument against its future existence bears equally against its present existence. There is as much evidence of the continued being of man, separate from the material organism, as of a thousand other existences that are never questioned.

Say not that what we call the soul is the result of a wondrous organization, and must cease with the dissolution of the body. That organized bodies can possess no powers which are not inherent in the elements of which they are composed, is an important axiom in philosophy; that the elements of the human frame are incapable of intelligence, consciousness, volition, is a proposition of which no proof will be demanded; and that mere organization can never originate mental phenomena, is the obvious and inevitable conclusion. Nay,

"there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This curious frame is only the tenement of the rational soul, and that soul is doubtless immortal. Destined by its Creator to perish, He would probably have revealed that destiny; but He has given us no such information—has nowhere intimated such an issue.

To establish the proposition that the soul dies with the body, infidelity must furnish proof, and that proof must be clear and ample; but infidelity has no proof to offer—infidelity is nothing better than a negation without a reason—a mere blind conjecture. The doctrine, at best, is only an opinion of my neighbor; why is not my opinion worth as much as his? Nay, is it not more rational and philosophical? I now exist; and, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, the presumption is just, that I shall continue to exist forever. Nature utters no negative to my hope. All analogy is in favor of my perpetual being. Change is constant, and manifold, and universal; annihilation is an event unknown in nature.

The very constitution of man—his interior consciousness, his sense of responsibility, his self-upbraiding for guilty deeds, his apprehension of a righteous retribution, his capability of indefinite improvement, his natural dread of annihilation, and his strong aspirations after a higher destiny—all give evidence of the life to come.

> "Say, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror,
> Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
> 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis Heaven itself, that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man!"

Nay, is not the soul naturally immortal? Is not immortality an element of its very constitution? The body is composed of parts, and these parts may be divided and dissolved; the soul is a simple substance, indivisible and indissoluble, and can perish only by the fiat of its Creator. The body is constantly changing—constantly increasing or decreasing; the soul remains the same under all the diversified phenomena of its manifestation—maintains an uninterrupted consciousness of its identity, through all the stages of its progress, and amidst all the accidents and vicissitudes of its outer

life. Its conscious identity proves its spirituality, and its spirituality is the basis of its immortality. It can be destroyed only by the Power that made it. And why should He destroy the noblest of His creations? Did He not make it for an important end? And shall He thwart His own purpose, or leave His design unfinished? Who can say that man, like the moth, attains his end in this brief period of existence? And if not—if he is capable of moving in a larger and loftier sphere—if, having learned all that this world can teach him, he still longs and struggles for vaster acquisitions of knowledge—another life is necessary, for the development of his powers, and the completion of the Almighty's plan; and, if there is no future being, man is an abortion—"a monster in the eternal order," and there is no discoverable wisdom or goodness in his Creator's economy.

Thus, we establish a very strong presumption of human immortality. This presumption is corroborated by the general sense of mankind. Whence the prevalent opinion, in all nations, in all ages—an opinion to which all worships, all poesies, all traditions, bear witness—that the soul lives when the body dies? Either it is an original impression, or it is a deduction of reason, or it is a revelation from God. There is no other assignable source of the idea. In either case the argument is conclusive. If it is an original impression, God himself must have given that impression, inweaving the sentiment of immortality with our very constitution, and that sentiment cannot be false. If it is a deduction of reason, there must be sufficient evidence to warrant that deduction by the great mass of mankind, and, in the face of such evidence, it must be highly irrational to reject the doctrine. If it is a revelation from God, that revelation has been sufficient to satisfy the world for nearly six thousand years, and there is now no room for controversy, nor excuse for unbelief. So that, whichever hypothesis you adopt, this always and everywhere prevalent opinion of mankind constitutes an irrefutable argument for the immortality of the soul; and in connection with the present manifest incompleteness of the Divine retribution, the unequal distribution of good and ill, and the decisive testimony of Scripture, forbids our regarding death as the terminus of our being.

Neither does God's account of death represent it as *a state of unconsciousness*. Consciousness continues in sleep, and sleep often but intensifies consciousness. The doctrine that death is a suspension or a cessation of consciousness was invented to accommodate the material-

istic philosophy, which attributes all mental phenomena to organization. It has no warrant in scripture, but is contrary to the express declarations of the Word of God. "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "We are willing, rather, to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." How do these, and similar passages, comport with the view in question? Is paradise a state of unconsciousness? Is being with Christ—being with the Lord—a state of unconsciousness? Is Christ, then—is the Lord, then—in a state of unconsciousness? Is a state of unconsciousness either desirable or gainful to the good—better than to remain in the flesh, serving so good a Master, sharing so rich a bounty, expectant of so vast a reward? The doctrine is wholly unscriptural.

Is it not equally unphilosophical? The intelligence of the soul proves its immateriality; but if the soul is immaterial, it is independent of its connection with matter, and its severance from matter cannot affect its consciousness. Consciousness, indeed, is the necessary condition of its being. An unconscious soul were an impossible conception. It were better to speak of an immaterial body. It were more rational to suppose an utter extinction of being. If the soul exists at all, it must exist in a state of consciousness. Unconsciousness were inanition. The present dullness of our consciousness—its frequent partial interruptions—result from the encumbrance of the soul's physical environments—the infirmities of the outer man. When "this mortal coil" is "shuffled off," consciousness will be vivid and perfect far beyond all present experience. The last long sleep attaches only to the body; the soul must continue to think and feel, rejoice or suffer, when these now so active forms are cold and decaying in their tombs.

Nor is death to be regarded as *the final condition of the material organism*. Sleep is nature's method of recuperation. He that sleeps shall awake with renewed vigor. The body is not to lie forever in the dust. The fallen and shattered tabernacle is to be reconstructed, glorious as the forms of angels, and imperishable as the tenant that has forsaken it for a season, to return to it forever. Must I argue this point? "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Does nature furnish no analogies? Heaven and earth are full of them

"All bloom is fruit of death;
All being, effort for a future germ.
Creation's soul is thrivance from decay;
And nature feeds on ruin. The big earth
Summers in rot, and harvests through the frost,
To fructify the world. The mortal Now
Is pregnant with the spring-flowers of To-come,
And death is seed-time for eternity."

In the final recovery of the body from the wreck and ruin of the grave a greater achievement than the constant reproduction from decay of animal and vegetable life around us? Is it a more wonderful thing than the creation of the worlds—than its own original construction? Whatever the difficulty to human apprehension, nothing is difficult to Infinite Wisdom and Power. Who is it that saith—"I will redeem them from death, I will ransom them from the power of the grave?" It is he at whose word the teeming spheres rolled forth from the inane, and order arose singing out of chaos. Nay, it is he who promised to raise his own body, and did so, demonstrating his power to raise the bodies of his people. "The captain of our salvation," he has conquered the king of terrors, and led our captivity captive. He has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The sleepers of a long night shall awake to an eternal day.

The proper view of death—the death of God's servants, for we speak of no other—is that of *retirement from labor*, and of *sweet and secure repose*. David, having finished his work, "fell on sleep;" and all the faithful departed are spoken of as "sleeping in Jesus;" and the angel of the Apocalypse saith to the beloved John—"Write, from henceforth, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." There is nothing here to be deprecated or dreaded. We lie down unfearing at night, expecting to rise refreshed in the morning. How welcome is rest to the weary husbandman, to the toilworn traveller, to the mariner after the storm, to the warrior after the battle. And what is there to fear in death? Guilt, indeed, may fear; for there is a dread hereafter of retribution. But what has the pardoned sinner to fear? What has the sanctified believer to fear? To him, dying is only falling asleep, and the grave is the bed in which he reposes after the toils of the day.

"How blest the righteous when he dies!
When sinks the weary soul to rest,
How mildly beam the closing eyes!
How gently heaves the expiring breast!
So fades the summer cloud away;
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies a wave along the shore.
Life's duty done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load the spirit flies;
While heaven and earth combine to say,
How blest the righteous when he dies!"

See! friends stand weeping around him. The beaded drops of death are gathering on his brow. What heavenly smiles play over his pallid features! What joyful whispers issue from his quivering lips! He has nothing to dread, but everything to hope. The blood of atonement is on his conscience. The spirit of adoption is speaking in his heart. He sees the last enemy approaching; but he is spoiled and vanquished. He walks in the dark valley; but he hears the voice of his Shepherd, and grasps trustfully the staff and the rod. He hears the roaring of the flood; but bright forms are beckoning, and sweet voices are calling, from beyond. He treads the chilling waters; but he feels the rock beneath his feet, while ministering angels haste to meet him, and sainted spirits "compass him about with songs of deliverance." O! the transition is only a passage to paradise, a birth into a better world, an introduction to a noble life

"When the soul, from sorrow freed,
Hastens homeward to return,
Mortals cry—A man is dead!
Angels sing—A child is born!"

The work is finished, and the laborer retires to his rest. The journey is ended, and the traveller enters his home. The voyage is over, and the seaman leaps upon his native shore. The warfare is accomplished, and the victor goes singing to his reward. It is the racer grasping his well-earned garland; it is the heir receiving his long-hoped-for inheritance; it is the king going forth to the festival of his coronation.

Death is presented to us here as *the common lot of our kind.* David "was laid unto his fathers." We travel no unfrequented path. It is "the way of all the earth." Adam himself returned to his dust; and all his posterity constitutes but one long funereal train, ever marching to its own burial. Every tick of the clock opens a

new sepulchre. One human body sinks into the earth every second, sixty every minute, nearly four thousand every hour, nearly ninety thousand every day, more than six hundred thousand every week, more than two millions every month, about thirty millions every year, about three billions every century; and not less than a hundred and fifty billions—perhaps a hundred and seventy-five billions—a multitude which no mind can grasp—have disappeared in that all-devouring vortex since the first funeral was celebrated in sight of the gate of Paradise. Some forty or fifty have fallen asleep since we began this enumeration; and in thirty years more, a number equal to the entire present population of the globe, (amounting to ten hundred millions,) will have mingled with the dust. We shall not rest alone in the sepulchre. All the great and good of earth await us there—sharers of the same mortality, expectants of the same resurrection. There is Abel, lying in his blood beneath his altar; and Noah, resting where they placed him, in the renovated earth, fresh from its diluvian baptism; and Abraham with his cherished Sarah; and Isaac with his beloved Rebecca; and Jacob, brought up from Egypt to be laid beside his Leah—all reposing in the cave of Macpelah, before Mamre; and the pilgrim bones of Joseph in Shechem; and Aaron in Mount Hor; and Moses in Mount Nebo; and Joshua in Mount Ephraim; and Samuel in his house at Ramah; and the life-giving skeleton of Elisha, mingling with common dust. And the tombs of the prophets are filled with holy forms; and the sepulchres of the kings boast their royal tenantry; and the mangled corse of Stephen sleeps tranquilly; and the shattered head of James the Just is fearless of the fuller's club. And there, among the blessed sleepers, is Paul from the block; and Peter from the cross; and Polycarp from the stake; and Luther, safe from the rage of Rome and hell; and the heroic victims of the Inquisition; and the noble martyrs of Smithfield; and the Wesleys, the Fletchers, the Whitefields, the Summerfields, who have filled the world with their fame; and the Paysons, the Bascoms, the Olins, the Newtons, whose virtues still survive them, like the odors of flowers fresh fallen; and many a dear companion, with whom we have walked hand in hand along the rugged path of life, and stood side by side in its fierce battles; and eyes that looked on us so lovingly, closed in their long sleep; and tongues that made the music of our households, hushed till the resurrection; and ears

that drank in the charm of our discourse, insensible till they thrill to the trump of God; and hearts that beat in unison with ours, still and cold, till they quicken with the pulse of immortality! All these have gone before us, and we haste to join them in the narrow house of hope. Our times are in God's hand; we know not when he may call us from the field, but we know that he will not call us too soon, nor leave us too long. "The graves are ready for us"—God prepare us for our graves!

Death comes to us as *a very humiliating event*. David "saw corruption;" so must we. These tabernacles must be dissolved. These curious frames are destined to decay. The worms will one day feast upon their fair and delicate proportions, and revel amid the ruins of the soul's deserted tenement. The beaming eye, the blooming cheek, the sinewy arm, the vigorous constitution, the most athletic specimens of physical humanity, must bow to the inevitable decree—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But not forever! "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time [in the tomb] will I wait, till my change come — [my change from corruption to incorruption.] He shall appoint me a set time, [for waking,] and remember me. He shall call, [from above,] and I will answer him [from beneath.] He will have a desire to the work of his hands." God will not forget his saints, nor leave them in the sepulchre. At the summons of the archangel's trump, "his banished ones" shall return to the joys of a blessed resurrection. "For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Our hope of a resurrection is founded chiefly upon the fact of his resurrection. He rose as our leader, and "became the first-fruits of them that slept." His resurrection was the resurrection of our nature, and a pledge of the resurrection of the race. He is "the head of the body," of which every individual believer is a member; and the rising head must surely draw the members after it. Thus, accurately, he is "the resurrection and the life," and we are "risen together with him"—"begotten again to a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead." As

the champion of our redemption, he travelled into the dominions of Death and Hades, spoiling principalities and powers: and when he returned from their demolished thrones, he brought with him the keys of all their prisons; and in due time he shall descend to unlock every dungeon, and set at liberty them that are bound, and swallow up death in victory. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;" and O what rapturous greetings — what shouts of celestial welcome—when all the angels shall descend with songs of jubilee, and the disembodied souls of all the saints that have passed into paradise shall come down from their blessed abodes,

> "Again to visit their cold cells of clay,
> Charmed with perennial sweets, and smiling at decay."

Here, beloved brethren, is your incentive to labor, and your encouragement to hope. Merely to witness such a scene, would be a thousand-fold reward for all the service you can ever render your generation by the will of God. To stand off on some neighboring planet, and behold with immortal eyes the mighty procession and the magnificent coronation, were an ample indemnification for all the toil, and pain, and sorrow, and sickness, and weariness, and anxiety, and temptation, and persecution, and disappointment, and bereavement, and thousand-fold affliction, that all the faithful of every nation and every age have endured, even if all were wrung into the cup of a solitary servant of God. But O! you are not to be uninterested spectators—you are to join the host and swell the triumph. It is for you "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" it is to gather your precious dust he shall send forth his angels to explore the cemeteries and sound the seas; and you, with all the subjects of the first resurrection, "shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall you ever be with the Lord."

In view of such an issue, with what holy zest and fervor should we devote ourselves to the service of our generation by the will of God! Our vocations may differ; our aims should be identical. We are here to benefit our race and glorify our Creator. He who does neither, by no means answers the end of his existence. He defrauds both God and man, and God and man will hold him to a stern responsibility for the perversion of his powers and privileges. O, Heaven! what wasted talents are treasured up for judgment! and who can bear the fierceness of Thine anger, augmented by the curses of ruined

souls, undone through his delinquency! The indolent and the vicious shall never be able to estimate the evil of their influence, till they awake in hell; and the wailing voices of eternity shall be ever preaching to them the infinite desert of their misdoing, and the infinite calamity of their loss!

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Some of you, at least—would that I could say all!—have formed a proper estimate of life and its aims, of death and its issues. You have fixed your standard for time, and cast your fortune for eternity. You, especially, my beloved brethren, who minister at the altars of God, must often have felt a solemn significance in these mutual relations of life and death. Yours is a holy and blessed work. It shall sanctify your talents, ennoble your virtues, and give you a record with the man after God's own heart. There is a dignity in it which immeasurably transcends all earthly engagements. You are servants, but you are servants of God. You are shepherds, but you are shepherds of His flock. You are stewards, but you are stewards of His household. You are builders, but you are builders of His temple. You are workers, but you are workers together with Him. You are messengers, but your message was brought from heaven upon the wings of a thousand seraphim. You are detained awhile from paradise to seek the aliens over a blasted world; but fidelity to your high commission will prove your surest passport within the cherub-guarded portal. A life of toil is before you, but there is an eternity of bliss beyond. Your path, amid the briar and the thorn, leads to the delectable mountains. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Among ministers, especially, "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Heaven and earth have claims upon us. The present and the future are alike interested in our labors. Men demand our energies—the blessing of our sanctified influence—in their behalf; while the eyes of witnessing angels range over our solemn assemblies, and departed friends from paradise stoop to listen to our vows. Let us magnify our office! Let us conceive worthily of our sublime vocation! Let us study to approve ourselves, both to God and to man, as workmen that need not be ashamed!

And O! to die after having done faithfully a work so great and

holy—to pass from the well-occupied pulpit to paradise—is it not stepping from the mountain-top, radiant already with the glory of God, into the Tishbite's chariot of fire? It is exchanging the throne of a petty province for that of an empire! It is graduating from a lower heaven to a higher! I have heard of men expiring in the pulpit, and I have desired such an end for my own. One moment to be standing so near to God, and the next to awake in his presence —one moment to be delivering his message to men, and the next to receive his welcome to my mansion—one moment to be pointing poor sinners to "the Lamb for sinners slain," and the next to grasp Him as my own eternal portion—one moment to be talking of the gold-and-crystal city, and the thunder-chant of its teeming minstrelsy, and the next to enter the gates and join in the song—O, crucified Master! this were too much for such a sinful worm to hope for, but that nothing is too great for Thy infinite love to grant!

Finally, my brethren, remember that in serving your own generation you serve also the generations to come. The seed sown in the present will bloom and bear fruit in the future, and propagate itself in successive harvests forever. Your influence will outlive you; your work will remain when you are gone; and the good you shall have done will flourish over your tombs. David "served his own generation by the will of God," in the character of a poet, as well as of a prophet and a king; and this day a thousand temples are ringing with the voice of his psalmody, and millions of worshippers are melting to the strain of his penitence, and soaring on the wings of his piety; and through the coming centuries, the saints shall still make these sacred compositions their songs in the house of their pilgrimage; and "the harp the monarch minstrel swept" shall still soothe the troubled soul, and heal the broken heart, and breathe its angel melodies over the bed of death, and around the tomb of the departed; and "the sacramental host of God's elect" shall march to its music in the last great battle for the faith; and its living numbers shall modulate the movement of the resurrection anthem!

Like David may you labor! With David may you rest!

C. B. Parsons

THE DIVINITY OF THE CHURCH.*

BY C. B. PARSONS, D. D.

"And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the highest himself shall establish her."—Psalms, lxxxvii, 5.

The great and distinguishing event in the history of time, is doubtless the founding among men of the Church of God; the setting up in the world, in accordance with the prediction of the prophet, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. "And in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."† To this kingdom, whose identity is to be recognised in the Church of Christ — to its assurances, its purposes and its powers—the world is largely indebted for every excellence of enjoyment, both of present possession and of future hope. Like the material sun in the heavens, which lends from itself the beams of light that we see reflected from every lower and lesser orb, while in kingly radiance it presides over the whole, the Church is the centre power of a sublime moral system whose divine illumination is ultimately to fill the whole earth: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."‡ From this centre, which shows us God, proceed forth all those rays of moral and intellectual brilliancy, as well as spiritual effect, that are reflected upon the glassy surface of the sea of time, and are gathered into the many circling eddies of earthly worth. All these are obedient unto their parent cause, in whose divinity is the sovereign rule. For as "the head of every man is Christ, ... and the head of Christ is God,"‖ this also is of Christ and from God — "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."§ This great and meri-

* A Sermon preached at the dedication of the First Methodist Episcopal Church South at Saint Louis, December 31, 1854.

† Daniel ii, 44. ‡ Habakuk ii, 14. ‖ 1 Cor xi, 3. § John iii, 16.

torious gift of God to man was the procuring cause of human redemption, the instrumental demonstration and sublime result of which appear in the institutions of the Church of Christ. They are divine; hence it is written, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."* And "the Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this (and that) man was born there."†

I. *The Divinity of the Church, considered from its origin.*

"The highest himself shall establish her."

If the origin of the Christian religion cannot be clearly traced to a Divine authorship, then must infidelity be right, and the pledges of faith in Christ the most stupendous fraud ever practiced upon a deluded world. But if, on the contrary, the tracery of the system be distinctly clear, and direct from God, through Christ, then, instead of "a cunningly-devised fable," it will appear to all (what it really is) the most magnificent truth ever revealed from heaven to man—a Daguerrean impress of God in his nature, made with infallible exactitude by the Holy Ghost, and conveyed by the lights of peace and purity to the tables of the human heart. While it is written, therefore, that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,"‡ (that is, the glorious realities which, as results of the system, shall be inherited by the Christian in the future world,) it is also said that "God hath revealed them unto us by his Holy Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God."‖

1. *The conception of the plan of salvation, of which the Church is the visible instrumentality, was first in heaven, and not on the earth, and was of God, and not by man.*

In the beginning God created all things, and pronounced them perfect—not only good, but "very good." The world, antecedent to the fall of man, presents to the mind a glorious vision of beauty, grace, and power. Wrapped in the sublime foldings of eternity past, God looked out from himself upon the mighty void, and said, "Let there be light." In obedience to the Divine fiat, the earth rose majestically into gracefulness of form and being; the heavenly bodies wheeled into their courses; and the sun, putting aside the veil from off his golden face, as the eye of Deity, looked forth upon the scene—when, it is said, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons

* Psalms lxxxvii, 2. † Verse 6. ‡ 1 Cor. ii, 6. ‖ Verse 10.

of God shouted for joy." Such a scene, we should think, would be, in the nature of things, abundantly sufficient to produce such a result. And yet, far more sublime was the birth of man. In his case, a Council of Deity seems to have been called; for "God said, Let US make man in OUR image."* And so man *was* created (whatever may be his condition now) in the image of God. How long this state of perfect being might have continued, or what would have been the result, is not for this present inquiry. He did *not* so continue. But, instead of resisting the temptation—of casting from him the forbidden fruit—and so, in a second triumph over Lucifer, calling the heavenly hierarchies to shout around the new-born victorious son of earth, he yielded—he tasted—and he died. With his own rash hand, he plucked away the keystone from the symmetric arch of human immortality, and the whole fabric sunk in ruins. The earth felt the blow, and shuddered; the elements labored, and breathed out their low lament; while heaven stood still, astonished (as it would seem, if not aghast) at the dreadful scene. To this point may be traced the first inception of the plan of salvation, whose promise was primarily revealed in heaven, and then applied upon earth. In the vision of St. John, (which may be considered in some degree a figure of the past, as well as a mirror of the future,) a mysterious book is made to appear, "which no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open."† And, as it is declared, the prophet wept, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book. But presently his tears are checked, and his sorrow is turned to joy, for a champion appears!—he comes in the panoply of the Highest, and shows himself to be the Lord of his own presence! Clothed with the omnipotence of power Divine, he lays his hand upon the book, which instantly unclasps itself beneath his touch, as the heavenly annunciation sounds, "Behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book!"‡ What was the book? Was it a symbol of the Bible—the book of mercy to man—the book of salvation to the world? So it would seem; for, as an immediate consequence of the opening of the volume, the Lion has turned to a Lamb, which, as an object of high worship, stands in the midst of the throne, robed in sacrifice, as it had been slain from the beginning of the world. It was the "Lamb

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*Gen. i, 26. † Rev v, 2. ‡ Verse 5.

of God," presented in sacrificial pledge, to "take away the sin of the world;" which pledge was afterwards redeemed on Calvary, when the universal altar smoked with the blood of a God! It was the book of human privilege—the charter of redemption in Jesus Christ—which, as a transcript of the heavenly mind, was destined to be, and is, the constitution of the Church; and, by grace, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Herein we discover, that the campaign of the world's restoration was drawn and plotted in the court of heaven. There it originated, and thence cometh all its power. With the promulgation of its plan, came forth the divine firman for the organization of its earthly forces, which, from the first till now, led on by "the captain of our salvation," have demonstrated to the world, and to listening heaven, the divinity of the organic cause. From the heavenly throne, the golden chain of divine truth, consecrated in the blood of the Lamb, and borne by the hand of *free-grace*, descended to man, and, encircling the whole body of time with its "link-work" of blessed promises, was borne back by an ascending Saviour, and joined to its counter extremity again in heaven;—thus, with its ample powers, it embraces and sustains the whole world, while it freely offers itself, by the Holy Spirit, to lift every individual of the human race, up to the seat of its divinity who will place their trust in it.

2. *The Divinity of the Church is seen in the manner of its communication, which was* FROM *heaven* IN *Christ.*

The long period of spiritual and moral darkness which preceded the coming of Messiah, presents upon the pages of the past a no less striking than solemn contrast with the glowing scene that witnessed his descent to earth. For centuries, the kingdom of Judah had been in a state of progressive decline. The prophecies concerning the Jews, according to Rabinical construction, had been mainly fulfilled, at least those whose fulfilment was located antecedent to the advent of Messiah, save one, in the promise of whose prediction they continue to rest their once bright, but now almost expiring hope. This was the prophecy of Jacob, made in the hour of his death—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* Year after year of anxious hope came and went, as the

* Gen. xlix, 10.

sun of the Jewish polity descended, slowly, the western heavens; and yet Shiloh came not. The flight of the Roman Eagle was already in the land, and forming his circles above the devoted city—awaiting, as it would seem, but the time appointed, to descend upon his quarry.*

The question now began to be started, What shall the end of these things be? "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" "Is his mercy clean gone forever?" If not, where is the prophecy of Jacob, Where is Shiloh? Already the decree of the Emperor has gone forth: Judah has been gathered together, and with the dawn of the morning, the enrolment of taxation, which was to wrest the "sceptre" and remove the lawgiver, would commence. The last day of Judean empire had came, and the last night of their Theocratic existence was preparing to spread its dark mantle, as a funeral pall, over their dead hope. But it is truly said, that man's extremity is God's opportunity; so it proved in this case. A band of pious shepherds were on this momentous night watching their flocks on Bethlehem's plains, which lay near to Jerusalem;—as they kept their sleepless vigil, it is likely their thoughts turned upon their national condition, and their minds communed with God. How solemn the scene! and presently too, how exciting! Just as the climbing night, in darkness wrapt, was about to strike upon the bell of time the turning hour, and tell to the city and the plains that the new day was born, a sun-like glory leaped from the heavens above, and lighted up the scene. The shepherds stood entranced. What was it? Not the morning, nor yet the meridian sun, but God in the fulfilment of his promise. For "Lo the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them."† In the midst of the glory, as in a chariot of descending light, a holy company now appear, for, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God."‡ It was Liberty's natal anthem; the liberty of the world from the bondage of sin and death; sung by the synod of God. *Shiloh had come* — "for unto you," said the sacred messenger, "is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."‖ It was the coming of the king into his kingdom, the head unto the Church, to impress, with his *own* presence, his *own* divinity upon the institution he had set up. Loud from the heavens rung the chorus of his advent, which still reverberates through the world—"Glory to

* Matt. xxiv, 23. † Luke ii, 9. ‡ Verse 13. ‖ Verse 11.

God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward man."* Let the "epithalamic" harmony roll on, and roll forever, until the "glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, even as the waters cover the sea."

"The highest himself shall establish her."

3. *In the character of its progress in the world, is seen the divinity of the cause, and, by consequence, also, the divinity of the institution of the Church.*

This progress was symbolized by the rolling stone of Daniel, seen of the king of Babylon in his night vision, which is interpreted to refer to the power and expansion of the kingdom of Christ. High amidst the mountains of the Lord, a stone, cut out without hands, commenced to roll down upon the earth. The great image, representing the idolatries as well as the kingdoms of the world, was crushed beneath it; the hills were leveled, and the valleys were raised, until, in its vast expansion, it filled the whole earth. This was Christianity, which, being of God, and not of man, was literally "without hands." A divine impulsion from the heavenly throne, culminating in power and expanding in purpose, extending itself, by the forces of an inherent Omnipotence, over countries and kingdoms, and embracing in its ample arms the whole world. For even as Jesus Christ "tasted death for every man,"‡ the time shall certainly come when, in the language of the prophet, "they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."‖ The varied history, the struggles, fortunes, persecutions, and proscriptions of the Church, through all which it has been so triumphantly conducted, attests also the divinity of the cause. To no other power but to that of the direct inspiration and presence of Almighty God, can be attributed the wondrous manner of the Church's preservation, when assailed, as it has been, by the political combinations of governments, and the settled hatred of the world. If it had been simply human in its nature, it is plain to see that with the crumbling dynasties and changing kingdoms of the world, it would have ceased to exist centuries ago; and if history had remembered it at all in the present day,

* Luke ii, 9. † Daniel ii, 31-35 ‡ Heb. ii. 9. ‖ Jer xxxi, 34.

it would have been to have classed it with its kindred rubbish of antique obsoletism—with the "myths" and "marvels" of ancient days. But instead of this, it has grown mightily in the midst of death, and expanded in power and possession most where proscriptions and persecutions have been loudest and most violent against it. The secret of the invincibility of its progress is contained in the fact that God is with it. The promise to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," has been verified in every step and period of its eventful history, from the first persecution at Jerusalem to the last *proscript* of Rome. The war, the poison, the steel, the axe, the flame, the gibbet, and the cord, have done their bloody work, and swelled the martyr list to tens of thousands; but even in this the divinity has overruled, and "the wrath of man has been made to praise God." Millions have risen into the places of the thousands lost, and God has magnified his cause above all the earth. Like a great seamark, or lofty tower of light, set to guide the endangered mariner over the angry deep, the Church stands amidst the billowy ocean of Time, the invulnerable "Pharos" of spiritual light and safety. May we not say, too, that it is also the great tower of strength, which holds together the structure of things? If not, what did Christ mean when he said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth"? The great characteristic of salt is that it *preserves*. The Church as an institution, and Christianity as a principle, operate to *preserve* the world for a time from that certain dissolution which, but for this divine interposition, would irremediably and irresistibly be its fate; for unto this end sin hath wrought in the earth. It might be said, then, of the Church and the world, as it was once said of Rome and the Colisseum, "While the Church stands, the world stands; but when the Church falls, the world falls." That is, while the Church holds its present associated relationship to the world of mankind, the earth will stand; but when the divinity of the cause has carried to its close the progress of the design—when from the circumference to the centre shall come upon the laden wires the travelled word of triumph, that the "battle of life is fought and won, and the last sinner converted to God"—then, casting the earth from it into the destruction prepared for its doom, the Church, in heavenly procession, will rise to glory and to God, inspired and

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* Exodus xxxi, 14.

sanctified and made eternally joyful, by that same divinity, which is now, and ever has been, the spirit and power of its resistless progression. "For the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* There

"The saints in his presence receive
Their great and eternal reward;
In Jesus, in heaven they live—
They reign in the smile of the Lord."

II. *The Divinity of the Church demonstrated in the purposes of its foundation.* "*This and that man was born in her.*"

"Marvel not," said the Saviour to Nicodemus,† "that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Holiness to the Lord, through the sanctification of the Spirit—which, as a principle, is the life of the soul, and without which "no man shall see God,"‡—is the corner stone of hope, in the christian structure.

1. *Holy Living.* This is the first fruitage of the system, and is the early demonstration, both to the individual himself in its *practice*, and to the world at large in its *profession*, of what the true purposes of the Church are,—of its designs in reference to the human family, and its mission to convince mankind of its instrumental divinity, and to mark this effect upon all "*who will*," with the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. While Christ, therefore, says to his followers, in order to the inspiration of their confidence in Him, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"‖ that the testimony of the cause might be more complete and perfect, the inner witness is also called, and joined with the outer, in the Divine attestation that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."§ No greater paradox could be invented, than is contained in the idea of an unholy christian; and no greater mistake committed than to attempt the ascent to heaven by any other way than holiness. Of this, Isaiah, in his vision of the Christian Church, says, "An highway shall be there, and it shall be called *the way of holiness*,"¶ which Christ locates in himself. For says He, "I am the WAY, and the truth, and the life."**

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*Isaiah xxxv, 10. † John iii, 7. ‡ Heb. xii, 14. ‖ Matt. xxviii, 20. § Rom. viii, 16
¶ Chap. xxxv. ** John xiv, 16.

The holy living, or holiness of heart and life, which is "*the way*" of the christian, is necessarily therefore *in Christ*, and cannot be anywhere else. Hence the Apostle says, "We walk by faith, not by sight."* To be in Christ, where the Church is, and where the Church, by the Spirit given, invites the world to come, involves two things which stand in necessary sequence to each other,—holiness and happiness. These principles, which are properties of the christian faith, in whichever way they may be logically placed, will be found to sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect. The *holy* man is the *happy* man, and the happy man is the holy man. These are sequences of greater infallibility than that ascribed to the chair of St. Peter. The philosophy of this principle is contained in the fact that christians are, by faith, in Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of holiness; and from him, as "the branch in the vine," they draw the aliment of their moral and religious being. Consequently, if the relationship be perfect, they must be like him and show as reflectors of *His divinity*. Less than this would be less than the measure made by Christ himself. He says of the relationship, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."† This the Apostle declares to be "fruit unto holiness," the end or result of which is "everlasting life." Holiness of life, then, is the great gospel mirror that shapes to the world the divinity of the cause—*the divinity of the Church*.

2. *Happy Dying*. This is the natural result of holy living,—for he who commences to be happy in Christ, by a holy profession of the christian faith, and continues therein until the end comes, makes assurance doubly sure to this effect. He takes a bond, by faith, for its accomplishment,—not of *fate*, but of *grace*, written by the Divine hand, and sealed in the blood of the Cross, whose pledge "is a crown of life," and whose security is the oath of God. "For wherein," says the Apostle, "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it by an OATH, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us"‡ That to die in peace is the greatest desideratum and hope of life, is too evident a proposition to need an argument. The sinner, as well as the saint,

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*2 Cor. v, 7. † John xv, 5. ‡Heb. vi, 17, 18.

will admit this. There is no difference between the Church and the world, with regard to the desirable end; both wish to be safe—both wish to be happy. The difference lies in the manner and labor of attaining unto that end. In this they are wide apart; with what wisdom God, and the final destiny of all things, will ultimately set forth. But that "happy dying" is the immutable consequence of holy living,—"Christ formed the hope of glory," is as well the witness as the cause. A triumphant death, or separation from the world, to the superficial observer, might be looked upon, perhaps, as enthusiastic, if not miraculous. But upon examination, it will show to be neither the one nor the other. It is perfectly within the range of philosophical exposition, and is as susceptible of demonstration as a problem in mathematics. Nay, more than this, it is just as impossible, if the Word of God be a verity, for a holy christian to die otherwise than happy, as it is for figures, truthfully calculated, to exhibit an erroneous result. "For so an entrance SHALL BE ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."* If a certain change, then, from poverty to riches, from gloom to gladness, and from death to life—a life of never-ending joy, and wrought out, through the faithfulness of the christian, by the direct agency of the Holy Ghost,—God himself being pledged to this end,—be sufficient to inspire a rapture at the parting from sin and misery and pain in the world, then the result is irresistible, and not only irresistible, but natural and philosophic. For God says "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."† In view of this, St. Paul exclaimed with holy joy, as he stood upon the confines of time, and gazed into eternity—his departure being at hand—"I am now ready to be offered." "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."‡ "O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?" . . . . "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."‖ This happiness in death hath its producing cause in the "*new* birth," which plants Christ in us; and which, as the accomplishment of one of Zion's purposes in the world, as set forth in the text, is another witness of the Divinity of the Church. Under

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* 2 Pet. i, 2 † Rev. ii, 10. ‡ 2 Tim. iv, 8. ‖ 1 Cor. xv, 55.

its influence the latter day reformers have manifested the same spirit. Fletcher shouted for joy in the hour of dissolution; Wesley said, "The best of all is, God is with us;" McKendree exclaimed, "All is well;" while myriads of others, sustained by the same Power and filled with the same Spirit, have gone up to glory and to God, where, with the holy martyrs as a cloud of witnesses, they wait beneath the altar to attest the mighty truth. They will receive their reward in the great day of the Lord.* Then, we say with the Poet,

"Let sickness blast, let death devour,
If heaven must recompense our pains;
Perish the grass, and fade the flower,
If firm the word of God remains."

"For this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.†"

III. *The Divinity of the Church, as manifested in the necessity that the manner of its acts, as well as their substance or consequences, should be immortal.*

The apostle to the Romans says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,"‡ which grace he sets forth to the Church at Ephesus as the great principle of salvation in Christ. "For by grace (says he) are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."‖ This being the case, the deduction is clear, that the emancipated soul, in its departure from the world, must carry with it, in active exercise, all those properties and powers which belonged to it in the days of the flesh. And these must be perfect and infallible, without which the judgment-seat would be liable to impeachment, and the doctrine of rewards and punishments become a simple absurdity. The necessity of this will sufficiently appear by reference to one faculty alone—that of memory. To make God just, memory must remain, and in absolute perfection. The least delinquency in this property of the mind or spirit to retrospect the past, and call up from the circles of time the procuring causes of reward or punishment, would invalidate the whole structure of justice, and make of reward simply a gift, and of punishment a mere affliction. The practices of earthly jurisprudence illustrate this necessity. No criminal court would hold itself guiltless in punishing either an idiot or a maniac, because the chief element of punishment being wanting—an

* Rev. vi, 9, 10, 11. † 1 John ii, 25. ‡ Rom. v, 20. ‖ Eph. ii, 8.

understanding on the part of the sufferer for what he suffered—the object would be defeated, and the end lost; so also with regard to rewards. The same necessity exists in order that God may be glorified in the son, as "the author and finisher" of the christian faith; *that* faith, which being baptized in the blood of the Lamb, bringeth salvation to man. Take from memory the scenes of Calvary and Gethsemane, and what would constitute the basis of heavenly praise for either time or eternity? There could be no such thing, because in that event there would be no sufficient cause of inspiration. In addition to this necessity, which the philosophy of the subject so plainly teaches, the Divine Word has also declared, by inference at least, the same thing. "Unto him that loved us, (said an angel voice,) and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."* In this communication to John, the heavenly messenger refers to antecedent acts on earth as the inspiring cause of eternal glorification in heaven. If the triumphant war of redemption, then, be remembered, whose short but mighty campaign was from "Gethsemane" to "Gabbatha," and from "Gabbatha" to "Golgotha," so, by construction, of everything else. This answers a very interesting if not important question that is frequently asked, "Shall we know our friends again when we meet them in the other world?" If the testimony of necessity and the declaration of the word of God be considered, the answer is, *we shall;* and not only shall we know our friends, but everything else also, from the days of Adam to the end of time. Knowledge, to this extent, must be intuitive, else the plan is imperfect. An example of this truth is presented by the record of the "transfiguration," in the intuitive recognition of Moses and Elias by the disciples. The same thing is declared by St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."† If we shall know other things as God knows us, which seems to be the idea of the apostle, then will knowledge be perfect, and if perfect, intuitive.

There needs no elaboration of this thought to show the amazing perfection and goodness of God, as exhibited in the scheme of human

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* Rev. i, 5 † 1 Cor. xiii, 12.

redemption; the very idea is laden with glory and crowned with hope. Not to a land of strangers will the christian go when dismissed from earth, but to a long-sought home—a home in the heavenly mansions of bliss,

"Where friends shall meet again."

There long-severed families shall be brought together, and be reconstituted one in Jesus Christ; there the old warrior of the cross, rejuvenate in the light of the Lamb, shall tell his battles o'er again, while the heavenly arches re-echo with the song of the Apocalypse—*that* song which no man could learn, "save the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."* Of that perfect number, which represents all the saved of mankind, is the Christian Church a component part. It once bore the Cross, but now it wears the Crown; it was once a traveller in gloom, but now it is an inhabitant of glory. The pilgrim reaches home. Sustained by the divinity of its cause, it hath passed, with its acts, through the purifying crucible of truth and grace, and now enters "through the gates into the city," midst the imperial shoutings of "Alleluia, Alleluia!" "And I heard a great voice, of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God."† It was the redeemed Church of Christ in the glory-land. Then in prelibation let the divine ecstasy of hope in celestial numbers roll. On earth let the saints begin the endless song—

"Cry aloud, in heavenly lays—
Glory doth to God belong;
God, the glorious Saviour, praise."

IV.—*The relation which the Church sustains to the World, politically—and especially in this country—shows its Divinity.*

"Put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem."‡

Much fear has been expressed by politicians in this country, and some alarm has been excited also in weak minds, lest the Church should in some way become interested and associated in the administration of the Government. This has been carried so far in some of the States, as to procure a constitutional proscription of the ecclesiastical office; depriving the incumbent of the enjoyment of the highest rights of freemen — eligibility to office, under the franchise of the peo-

* Rev. xiv, 3. † Rev. xix, 1. ‡ Isa lii, 1.

ple Whether this be right or wrong, belongs not to this present occasion to declare. It is "*prima facie*" evidence, however, that a fear has sprung up with the powers that be, that there is another *King* than *Cæsar*, and that the Prince of this World is not safe from the influences of righteousness, when brought into association with the children of God. In this proscription and fear, the world itself bears testimony to the Divinity of the Church or Kingdom of Jesus Christ; of whose head and governor it is said, "He *must* reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."* The relation of the Church to the world may be likened to the relation of the heart to the human system; it is the organ of vitality—the seat of life. Particularly is this the case in the American States, whose origin was in the Church, which was divinely led by the spirit of its own inspiration, to that home in the "wilderness where (in the language of the Bible) she hath a place prepared of God;"† and whose protection and defence, in the nation's growth to empire and to power, have so manifestly been of heaven. It was Washington, at midnight, in the grove of prayer, more than Washington in the battle-field, that wrought out the liberties of the Republic. His prowess became invincible, because the shield of God was about him, for God's own great purpose—the restoration of the world to liberty from the oppressions of despotism, and the redemption of the family of man to the hope of immortality and eternal life, from the bondage of sin and death. It was this that edged the hero's sword and nerved the hero's arm; and to this end is the American Republic a two-fold missionary to the nations of the earth. As a political Colossus, in the first instance, it plants its foot upon either land, and holds out to all people the light of liberty and equality; while evangelism, in the second, as a diamond set in gold, sparkles in the illumination, and sanctifies the blessed gift. As the tide of glory rolls on, from the West to the East—from the New to the Old World—crowns sit loosely upon their wearers' heads, and thrones begin to crumble; "For the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up."‡

Let it not be thought that a union of Church and State, however, is referred to or desired in the utterance of these sentiments and views—that is, in any greater degree than such union now exists—

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* 1 Cor. xv, 25. † Rev. xii, 6. ‡ Matt. iv, 16.

a union of spirit, fraternity, and design, which constitute the natural relationship of antecedents in common—referring to the same parentage. The Church in this country (unlike that of any other) is the elder born of the same parentage with the Government. Both are from God, and have shared alike his heavenly protection. Both have their offices to fill, for which they are mutually dependent upon each other, even as both are dependent upon him who is the source of all power. In united division, then, we may say, (if such a seeming paradox may be used,) let the star of Bethlehem and the stripes of Confederation wave forever over the descending hosts of God's chosen people, as in their march they go down the pathway of time—the political and the spiritual insignia of the kingdom of Christ upon earth. And when arrived at the end of the campaign, then let them, side by side, pass gloriously together to the promised land, where each, sanctified by the spirit and intent of the other, in the approving smile of heaven, shall become consolidate, and remain one forever in the Paradise of God. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection—[who have part in Christ, who was the first to rise from the dead]—on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."* In this view, the Altar of Liberty becomes also the Altar of Christianity, and the Temple of Freedom converts to the Temple of God.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.—*The acceptance of gifted privileges, conferred by a superior power, whether upon communities or individuals, involves (by construction) the performance of duties, both conditional and personal; and upon the faithful discharge of those duties, ordinarily, depends all the hoped-for benefits to be enjoyed.*

Among the first of those duties is to be recognised, the obligation to make ready the house of the Lord—to prepare the place, and arrange the circumstances of Divine Worship. A nation or community that should neglect this would readily be pronounced heathen, and would be listed in the condemnation of those that forget God. This constituted a part of the inspiration of Moses, when upon the shore of the Red Sea; and in view of Israel's redemption he sung his hymn of triumph: "The Lord is my strength and song; he is

* Rev. xix, 6.

become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an HABITATION—my father's God, and I will exalt him." Scarcely had the echoes of that anthem of joy died away midst the mountain peaks of the "pass" that led down to the deep, ere the tabernacle was planted. The altar (though a rude one) was owned and blessed of Jehovah; the people were honored; and the wilderness of "Shur" became henceforth, for forty years, the place of God's encampment upon earth. But when Jerusalem was builded, then the temple was also demanded. While Jacob dwelt in tents, God, in his tabernacle—making manifest his presence by the pillar of cloud and fire—dwelt with them. But when Jacob went up from the desert to dwell in palaces, a palace for Jehovah was also required; and Solomon the king, who was deputed its builder, received both the plan and the direction for its accomplishment from God himself. When the temple was finished, the "Shekinah" of acceptation, which filled the place, attested the Divinity of the cause and the high approval of heaven. In this the Jews performed a solemn obligation which rested upon them. The same obligation now rests upon all people—that is, to make the house of God to correspond, both in elegance of structure and beauty of adorning, with those in which they dwell themselves. There can be no better guide to what *should* constitute a right standard of Christian beneficence—no better rule to be observed in reference to what God requires for the appointments of his service, as regards "the Church he has purchased with his own blood"—than to make the proportionate measure, according to the allowances made for private and domestic uses. This was the graduating scale among the Jews, who were required to give one-tenth of all their gains to the service of the altar. The same law—the law of tithes—exists in some countries still. But a tenth part is not now required to meet the demand—a far less proportion would be sufficient; nay, a *tithe* of the *tithe*, if promptly paid in, and faithfully administered, would do away with the inconvenience of poor church houses, and drive indigence from the doors of every respectable congregation. And yet the rule should be the same. If God requires less from the world than in former years, it is not because of the increasing *merit* of mankind, but of his own amazing goodness—the munificence of his great mercy. A pleasant illustration (and profitable also) of this doctrine (and which in its turn is likewise symbolic of the progress and requirement of the aggregated Methodism of the present time) is

presented in the history of this society, and the erection of this beautiful house. When Methodism was small in the city and the town, and few of the wealthy and the great of the land honored its altars with their gifts, or its pales with their presence, then the former house—the Tabernacle*—was all that was required to supply the need. God then and there honored his name and his cause in the conversion of many souls; some of whom yet linger upon the shores of time, as ancient waymarks in the pathway to heaven—connecting links betwixt the past and the future, and unto whom the present finger of historic observation points, and says, "This and that man were born there." But when numbers and wealth increased; when Methodism, no longer puny and despised, laid off her ancient and distinctive garb, (how great the pity!) and the *Nicodemuses* of the world, and of kindred "*Sanhedrims*," came in to inquire of "the better way," not only in night, but also in the broad day; then this "latter house" (the Temple†) was demanded to be built. In obedience to the requirement, and by the liberal interference of one‡ who was the original benefactor of the former house, and whose name is almost a synonym for active benevolence, in every direction both of public and private philanthrophy, the structure rose, which now stands alike an honor to progressive Methodism, and an ornament to the City of the West.

But shall "the glory of this latter house be in truth greater than that of the former," and will the God of Jacob here give peace?|| So may it be. Religion, it is true, does not consist in fashions and in forms, but in the demonstration of the spirit and the power of God. There may be no specific Christianity in an humble house, a close bonnet, or a straight-breasted coat, it is likely; and yet the association which they had with deep piety and fervent zeal for God, in the days of our fathers and our mothers, makes them pleasant to the eye of the mind, when memory is busy in its filial retrospect. The modern heart, hidden in the midst of fleecy clouds of lace, and overwhelmed with billowy folds of "crinoline," MAY *feel*, and the arm robed in silks and satins *may* be *strong*, as if clothed in humble garb; and yet it will require an effort, when (through faith) such ones stand by *the manger* at the inn, and look upon the babe of Bethlehem, or by the cross, or by the sepulchre, to forget their costly and proud attire. Better leave it off.

* The old 4th street Church. † First M. E. Church South. ||Hagg. ii, 2.
‡ Col. John O'Fallon, who gave the ground.

There was an untrammeled freedom — a power—in the simplicity of original Methodism, which it is to be feared has not gained by its alliance with the too fashionable world. "Watch and pray, then—oh, watch and pray—that ye enter not into temptation." Let not the grandeur of your house, nor the splendor of your equipage, nor the costliness of your attire, steal away your affections from the cross of Christ; but be humble and be faithful, as in the days of your former house. Then peace will be given here, to you and to your children; "and of Zion it shall be said that this and that man was born in her." May it so come to pass! Here, in after years, when the scenes of the present, and their actors, have passed away from the memories of the living, may shouts of gladness rise from new-born souls, in the midst of this sacred altar, which is now consecrated, in perpetual sacrifice, to the service of the living God. And may the Divinity of the cause and place be the constant inspiration of both the progress and the result. Then, if those who go hence are permitted to know what is passing here, there will be joy in heaven, not only with the angels of God, because of the conversion of sinners, but with the saints of the Most High, also, in their blessed retreat. And thus joy will necessarily be increased by the knowledge of the pious benefits received by their posterity, from the works which they did while they were yet upon the earth. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. . . . . For they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."* *Reader*, HAVE FAITH IN GOD!

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* Rev. xiv, 13.

G. F. Pierce

REV. BISHOP GEORGE F. PIERCE, D.D.

DEVOTEDNESS TO CHRIST.*

BY REV. BISHOP PIERCE.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."—Romans xiv, 7, 8.

The spirit of Christianity is essentially a public spirit. It ignores all selfishness. It is benevolence embodied and alive, full of plans for the benefit of the world, and actively at work to make them effective. Catholic, generous, expansive, it repudiates all the boundaries prescribed by names, and sects, and parties, and "stretches its line into the regions beyond," even to the uttermost parts of the earth. The world is its parish. Its wishes are commensurate with the moral wants of mankind; and the will of God, who gave His Son to die for us sinners and our salvation, is the authority for its labors and the pledge of its triumphs.

It is the policy of every form of infidelity and speculative unbelief, and of every false religion, to depreciate and undervalue the nature of man. They despoil him of his true glory by their chilling, preposterous theories, even while they affect to magnify him by fulsome eulogy of his intellect and its capacious powers. By false notions of personal independence, they isolate him from his kind, and the sensibilities which Heaven intended should flow out free as the gushing spring, they contract and stagnate, till the heart grows rank and putrid with its own corruptions. But while our holy religion exalts man as made in the image of God, the head and chief of the system to which he belongs, and thus invests the *individual* with dignity and value vast and incalculable, far, far beyond "worlds on worlds arrayed," it yet links him in closest fellowship with the kindred of his race. For him the ground yields its increase, the sun shines, the stars beam in beauty, the winds blow, the waters run. Earth, air, and ocean are all astir with agencies commissioned to do him good;

* A Sermon preached in McKendree Church, Nashville, Tennessee, April 15, 1855, in memory of the late William Capers, D. D., one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church, South

but not for him alone. No matter what his rank, power, influence, he but shares the bounties which have been provided, in the munificence of Heaven, as the common inheritance of all his fellows. No matter what his personal rights and interests, he is but a part of a great whole. He belongs to a system. No choice of his own, no social caste, no civil distinctions, can detach him from it. Linked with the world around him by a law of his nature and the decree of his Maker, every plan of isolation is abortive; and the very effort at separation and exclusiveness brands him as a miser, a misanthrope, a selfish, heartless wretch, without natural affection or any redeeming principle. A brute in human form—a demon, with the lineaments of man—he is under the outlawry of a world itself, alas! but too ignorant of the law of love and the noble aims and ends of this mortal life.

Bound together, as we are, by the ties of a common nature and of mutual dependence, every man is a fountain of influence, good or bad, conservative or destructive. Whether he will or not, he is an example. His language, spirit, actions, habits, his very manners, all tell—forming the taste, moulding the character, and shaping the course of others, to the end of time. *No man liveth to himself.* He can not. Apparently he may, but really he does not. His plans and his aspirations may all revolve around himself as a common centre, but within and without their orbits will be concentric circles, enclosing other agents and other interests. He may rear walls around his possessions, call his lands by his own name, and his inward thought may be, as the world phrase it, to take care of himself and his dependents, but he can neither limit the effect of his plans, nor forecast the inheritance of his estate. Another enters even into his labors. Disruptive changes abolish his best-concerted schemes, and scatter to the winds all the securities by which he sought to fence and individualize his own peculiar interest.

But while all this is true, and constitutes the basis of a fearful responsibility, it is not exactly the idea in our text. In the declaration before us, the Apostle does not affirm a principle as predicable of our nature and its social relations, nor merely state a fact as resulting from an immutable law of our being; but he presents a moral rule, and erects it into a standard for the adjudication of character. He defines the rights of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the obligations of those who claim to be His disciples and representatives.

A dispute has arisen in the Church concerning meats and days—what was allowable and consistent in the one case, and what was required and binding upon the other. It was a question of privilege—of Christian liberty. Assuming that the parties were equally sincere, the apostle did not seek to quell the agitation by a temporary expedient, a dubious unreliable compromise; but took occasion to declare a principle of universal authority and application. He lays down a rule by which we are to judge others as well as to measure ourselves. What one may regard as a ceremony and a superstition, is not to be charged upon another, whose opinion is different, as proof that his profession is a mask or his piety insincere. Nor is the latter to denounce the former as a time-server—a man-pleaser, turning the grace of God into licentiousness. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

Conceding the right of private judgment—frankly confessing imperfect knowledge—let both judge charitably. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink—but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There may be, there is, unity in the great principles of Christian morality, and yet a difference of judgment and practice in little things. We are not to despise one another because of this diversity, nor, though fully persuaded in our own minds, harass a brother by the vexatious obtrusion of our peculiar notions. His liberty is not to be bounded by our prejudice, nor his conscience regulated by our superstition. The law of love not only requires good will, benevolent affection towards all men, but stretches its authority over our opinions, our moral judgments, our estimate of character. We are not to perplex the weak with doubtful disputations, nor incur the risk of imbittering our own feelings by urging our ultraisms as essential to salvation. Life is too short to be wasted in frivolous disputes, even about matters of conscience. Christianity is too precious and noble and vast to be scandalized by contentions in the Church about meats and drinks—the tithing of mint and anise and cummin. As Christians, we are public men. We live for our race. The Lord is our judge. Great principles are to be avowed—maintained—diffused—established God and our generation are to be served—the one to be glorified, and the other to be saved. "For none of us liveth to him-

self, and no man dieth to himself. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

The text is a comprehensive description of a Christian's life—a decisive test of character. It is the language of one who well knew what Christianity is, and who himself exemplified its principles and spirit.

Avoiding minute details, we proceed to fix the meaning of the terms *living unto the Lord, and dying unto the Lord.*

Living unto the Lord may be considered as implying that we distinctly recognize the will of God as the rule of life.

If I may so express it—as the natural subjects of the Almighty, we are bound to serve him to the full extent of the powers He hath given us He has an unquestionable right to our obedience. This results from our relation as creatures. He made us, and He preserves us. This original obligation, instead of being relaxed and impaired, is confirmed and intensified by purchase and redemption.

The will of God is to be sought in the statute-law of the gospel—the plain and express decrees which define and regulate our duty. It is important to notice and to remember that the service we are to perform is not left to our choice. We have no rights of legislation in the premises. Our task is assigned us, divinely appointed. Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do? ought to be the inquiry of every human spirit. The word of God gives the answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." This is the law and the prophets—the true philosophy of life—the first and second commandments. On these hang all the subordinate requirements of "judgment, mercy, and faith." The precepts of Christianity are so wisely and graciously adapted to promote the private interests of individuals and the general welfare of human society, that many who are disaffected towards the divine government, will, for their own sakes, choose to do many things which are just, and kind, and beneficent. These things are comely, reputable, of good report among all men; and a man cannot therefore serve himself more effectually than by practicing the great virtues of humanity. Man's chief controversy is with God—against Him he wars He is not naturally the enemy of his kind. While some fierce and unsocial passions occasionally break out, and startle us by the atrocity of some

monstrous individual crime, and while nations wrought into fury sometimes quench their hate in blood, yet commonly the social instinct, and the love of ease, and the fear of retribution, prevail over what is hostile and malignant in our nature. In the absence of injury or provocation, men generally wish others well, and are even disposed to do them good. To some of the duties of Christianity there is therefore no natural aversion—no active repugnance. And it is greatly to be feared that many are basing their hopes of heaven upon their exemption from the vices that corrupt and embroil society, upon their amiable feelings and kind relations—upon neighborly offices and charitable expenditures. But those virtues which are merely human—educational—conventional—cannot save. In this world they have their origin, their use, and their reward. The great element of piety is wanting. There is no reference to God. And here is a marked difference between the man who lives for himself, and the man who lives unto the Lord. The one obeys a constitutional impulse perhaps—consults his reputation, his business, his influence; or, it may be, rising a little higher, he may rightly estimate his responsibilities as a father or as a citizen, and so is honorable, moral, refined. But he is without God in the world. Oh, the loneliness and destitution of such a spirit! Atheism is his religion, if not his creed; or at best he is an idolater—himself the idol. The other realizes the divine authority, and obeys *because* God commands.

The relative duties of life are performed not to gratify a native generosity, or eke out a dubious popularity, but as a part of the service and homage due his Maker. Over the whole circumference of his engagements—in the bosom of his family, the busy marts of trade, the retirement of the closet, the worship of the sanctuary, the citizenship of the world—there presides a solemn recognition of the Divine presence, his being and his empire, and every step is taken in reference to Him as a witness and a judge. I know that many profess and seem to be religious on lower principles. Public opinion, consistency, ease of conscience to shun hell, to gain heaven, all operate, and they supersede and dethrone the higher law in the text. Not that these motives are illegitimate, but partial and inferior. They ought not to become principal and paramount; and they cannot without a deleterious unhingement of character, and a transfer of our duty from the ground of what is divine and authoritative, to that which is human and self-pleasing. The motive in the text is compre-

hensive, embracing all lower ends—harmonizes all, yet subordinates them all to its own sovereign sway. Like a conqueror at the head of his battalions, it marches forth to subdue the insurgent elements that would dispute its dominion. It is the "stronger man" keeping his goods in peace. Without it, there can be no consecration, and with it, no compromise of duty. The failure to recognize and adopt this great principle of morality, has fearfully diluted the experience of the Church, and embarrassed every department of Christian service. "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart," said the Psalmist. No man can rise above the constraining considerations which spring from interest, feeling, safety, pleasure, in reference to all minor questions of duty, save as he resolves religion into some great general principles and purposes, from the decision of which there is no appeal. These principles, wisely adopted and well understood, will marshal all the chances and changes of life, all its untoward events, all its interfering agencies, so that they shall fall into ranks like well-trained soldiers under the command of a superior officer. They simplify religion, disentangle it from all purely selfish influences, from the bias of worldly interests, from the guile of passion, and leave a man free to glorify God according to the Scriptures. How simple and sublime the character deriving its greatness and worth from God and duty! How grandly independent is he who knows no fear but the fear of God, who seeks no favor but the smile of Jesus, and whose single eye scans all things, great and small, in the light which no shadow can eclipse! His life regulated by one great pervading law and purpose, he escapes all the trials by which feebler and less decided Christians are tormented and impeded. His heart, consecrated in all its plans and purposes, falters not at sacrifice, or peril, or suffering. Difficulties and doubts he has none. His religion is to him a law that never changes. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His plan of life settled scripturally, advisedly, and in the fear of God, he is not to be bought or bribed, frightened or defeated. Turning neither to the right nor left, he moves right on. If along his pathway the den of lions opens, he lies down and lodges for the night, and in the morning tells how the angel kept him. If the furnace be kindled to test or to destroy him, he walks unburnt in the flame, and comes forth without the smell of fire upon his garments. Escaped from the shallows and the breakers where so many toil with unavailing oar, he has launched on

the deep, and, favored by wind and tide, looks with lively hope for an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But the principle I am discussing, considered as a test of character, and a rule by which to adjudicate our Christian claims, is worthy of enlargement. Living unto the Lord implies that we make the approbation of God our governing aim—that we study to please Him, and that, whatever we do, we do all to His glory.

Religion, to be saving, must be supreme: "My son, give me thy heart." "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." God claims the body and the spirit. He will not divide the empire, which is his by right, with invaders and usurpers. Unless, therefore, His approval is the predominant motive, we not only base our Christianity upon mistaken apprehensions of the Divine claims, but we repudiate the only principle which can subjugate the rebellious elements and passions of our fallen nature. Before conversion, we form attachments and allow indulgences wholly inconsistent with a life of devotion. To do well, we must first cease to do evil. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be crucified. Self-denial is the first law of discipleship. Who would submit to have the right hand cut off, the right eye plucked out—much less perform the operation upon himself—unless by the expulsive power of a new and holy affection, these enemies which encamped within his heart shall be routed and taken captive? There must be the ascendency of another and a higher principle than any which is merely human, to break down the dominion of appetite, and passion, and habit. Flesh and blood are sad counselors in the work of God. To consult them is to betray our spiritual interests. The multitude do evil—we must dare to be singular. But who will come out from the world—brave its scorn—defy its persecution—disdain its blandishments, and rebuke its ungodliness by declining its fellowship? None but those who feel that God's smile amply remunerates for the world's contempt, and that the testimony that we please Him outweighs all earthly treasure, and outshines all earthly glory.

To live for Christ, and to live for ourselves, is utterly impracticable. The union is a moral impossibility. We love a good name; but they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. We are rich; but the command is, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come follow me." We love home and friends; but

Christ calls to absence, and labor, and sacrifice. Religion is popular—you embrace it: the Church is fashionable—you join it. The people shout Hosanna, and Jesus is escorted by a worshipping multitude; you say, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." The Master replies: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." What will you do now? Go away sorrowful? or, having counted the cost, go on to build? "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" or have you settled this question long ago in favor of duty and heaven? Are you living unto the Lord? You are making a fortune; is it that you may do more good? You are rising in the world, seeking title, and honor, and influence; is it that you may enlarge your sphere of usefulness? O brother, if the carnal affection grows along with the carnal interest, thy prosperity may destroy thee. Or if thou art seeking thy own pleasure, gratification, and advancement, thou hast fallen from grace. Even Christ pleased not himself. Paul obeyed the heavenly vision immediately, conferring not with flesh and blood. And every man who would fulfil the great purposes of his creation and redemption, must make God's approving judgment the motive of all his actions, and the goal of all his efforts. Oh, how the saints of the Bible luxuriated in this element of devotion! "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life: to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." These exemplars illustrate our subject. They lived unto the Lord. In His favor was life. "A day in His courts was better than a thousand." The world's parade and pomp paled before the glory of the sanctuary. The festal charms, the music, and the mirth of the tents of wickedness, were despised, and the lowest place in the house of God preferred. They felt that they did not live at all except as they lived unto the Lord.

This is the spirit of the text. Life is not to be measured by days and months and years, but by a succession of services to Him that loved us, and gave himself for us. I have no doubt that when the last hour comes; that hour for which earth has no comfort and philosophy no hope—when the spirit, disenthralled from the seductions of time, the witchery of sense, shall stand face to face with the realities of an eternal state, then even life's most serious engagements

will all seem as vacancies, like the hours passed in sleep, and the pleasures of the world like the vagaries of sleep itself. Go, buy, sell, get, gain, build a name, rear houses, add field to field, project public improvements, locate railroads, plan empires: this is all labor and travail—vanity and vexation of spirit.

This is to breathe, not to live—to work, not to enjoy. "All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the grass;" "but he that doeth the will of God, liveth and abideth for ever." To love God, this is joy: to know Christ, this is gain: to do good, this is life. Mortal man! child of the dust! this vain life which we spend as a shadow is but the vestibule of being. Here we die while we live: the cradle rocks us to the tomb. We spend our strength for naught. Riches fledge and fly away. Honor is but a dew-drop, glittering in the morning ray, exhaled by the very beam that makes it shine. Love and friendship—the heart's blest affections—wounded, pine; or, bereaved, they dwell among the dead, like Mary weeping there. Oh! where is the bloom without the blight? the sun without the cloud? Lord Jesus, thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence, though dimly seen, is unutterable joy, and where thou art in glory visible, is heaven.

"Whether we die, we die unto the Lord." This is an important declaration, "wholesome and full of comfort." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." The death of a good man is of too much import to happen by chance. It is an important instrument in God's plans of mercy and judgment. The event is big with instruction. Not to lay it to heart when the righteous perish, is criminal insensibility—a wicked indifference to the dispensations of heaven. Such a death is a public calamity. It is not a sparrow falling to the ground, a flower fading in the field, "the sere and yellow leaf" afloat upon the autumnal gale, and then descending to the earth, where its mates of the forest lie hueless and dead. A light is quenched, and the darkness grows deeper. The world is bereaved of a conservative influence. The prayers he would have offered are lost; and if "the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much," how great the loss! The family loses a guide and guardian, the Church an example, the country a benefactor. He serves the country best who loves God most. He is not the patriot who fights the nation's battles, right or wrong; but he who leads a life of quietness and peace, all godliness and honesty. He is not the most im-

portant man who projects your laws, marshals your parties, and leads in politics; but he who, by faith, and prayer, and power with God, averts the wrath our sins provoke. David did more for Judah when he bought Araunah's threshing-floor, built an altar, offered sacrifice, and stayed the pestilence, than when, with kingly authority, he despatched Joab to quell the rebellion of Absalom. The intercession of Moses, when, with holy boldness, with daring confidence, he rushed between the offending Israelites and the Almighty, girded for battle and extermination, and prevailed for their salvation, wrought a greater wonder than when, obedient to his magic rod, the parted waters returned in vengeance upon Pharaoh's pursuing host. Elijah was the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof—the bulwark of the nation. The clouds of heaven hung their keys at his girdle, and the widow's meal and oil multiplied beneath His blessing. A good man! Oh, ye men of royal birth, ye sages, statesmen, heroes, ye glimmer faintly beside the saint shining in the image of God. His wisdom is divine, his lineage heavenly, and greater than he who taketh a city, for he hath conquered himself. I admire architecture, painting, sculpture, the wonders of the chisel and the pencil. I love nature in her mountain majesty, the rolling ocean and the woodland vales—all that is lovely and sublime; but God is witness I would go farther to see a good man, to hear him talk of Jesus, enter into his communion, feel the moral grandeur of his destiny, than to behold any achievement of art or scene of nature. These change and perish: he is immortal. He thinks, he feels, he loves. His body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and his spirit is bathed in the glory of the Shekinah—the symbol of the presence and worship of God. The departure of such a man is a token of displeasure. It is the voice of Heaven in judgment. But, though the family is afflicted, the Church in mourning, and the nation smitten, *he* "dies unto the Lord" and "in the Lord." With him "it is well."

Or the text may find its fulfilment in that God hides him from the evil to come. I knew a good man who, in dying, said, "My God is housing me from a storm;" and the declaration was prophetic. Soon evils that would have broken his heart and brought him in sorrow to the grave, came upon his family in overwhelming disaster. Dangers—spiritual dangers—are coming; domestic calamities draw nigh; national troubles are fermenting; God sees the clouds gathering, the

elements brewing; and, while yet the cloud is as a man's hand, and the winds are murmuring afar off, He transfers his faithful servant to the repose of the blest. "In his hand are all my ways." Delightful thought! He directs my steps, hears my sighs, chooses my allotments, numbers the hairs of my head, is about my bed and my path, and knoweth how and when to deliver. "Whether we die, we die unto the Lord."

But it may be asked, Why, if the righteous are so dear to Christ and so valuable to the world, are they doomed to death at all? Why does not religion, which saves us from a thousand other evils, release us from this law of mortality? In answer, I remark: The reasons are obvious on reflection. Exemption from death, as a reward of piety, would appeal so strongly to the love of life—the quickest, the most enduring instinct of our being—as to override the freedom of choice, and thus make rational, voluntary piety impossible. We should adopt it as a starving man would clutch offered bread, or the man dying of thirst would seize the cup of cold water. And besides the violence done to our nature in making the propensities decide a question belonging—under the present economy and in the proper fitness and adaptation of things—to the intellect, the heart, the will, the incongruity would follow of proposing a carnal, earthly motive for a spiritual life. On such a plan, Christianity must approve what she now repudiates; and the holy considerations by which she now seeks to win us from error to wisdom, from earth to heaven, would all be neutralized and lost, and the world to come be doomed to borrow the forces of time to achieve its noblest victories.

The evil of sin cannot be shown but by its punishment. This conclusion is legitimate from what is revealed of the divine administration, and from what we know of the processes of conviction in the mind of man. God hates sin. It is a blot upon his dominions. But he has not left the world to learn the fact even from the awful denunciations of his word, but he has written it in the catastrophe of nations. The deluge, famine, pestilence, fire and brimstone from heaven, have been the messengers of his wrath and the instruments of retribution. And where, save in the crucifixion of Christ Jesus and the damnation of the guilty, will you look for a more impressive demonstration of God's justice and his indignation against sin, than in the dying agonies of infant innocence, or the mortal convulsions of him who dies unto the Lord? It is written, "The body is dead because of sin," even when

"the spirit is life because of righteousness." But death, with all its antecedents and consequents—the mournful harbingers of its approach and its power—the loathsome desolations of its victory and its reign, to the saint of God is no longer death. It is but dissolution—a departure. Sad in its aspects and accompaniments, it is nevertheless a release. A pillar of cloud and fire, its shadows all fall on this side the grave; beyond, all is light, and life, and glory. We die unto the Lord,—and may I not add for the Lord. The death of the good preaches terror to the wicked. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" Oh! we ask not "Enoch's rapturous flight, nor Elijah's fiery steeds" to bear us away, if by dying we may help to convince the world of sin and judgment. We would do good even in death. As we wish to live to serve him "who loved us," so would we die to make his glory known—"the justice and the grace."

"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "The chamber where the good man meets his fate" is a scene of glory. See his patience under suffering; the calm submission, and often the joy unutterable. Is this human fortitude; the stoicism of a blind philosophy; the outflashings of sentiment and fancy? No, no. It is the fulfilment of promise; grace abounds. It is the conviction that the judge of all the earth will do right. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It is the knowledge of the Redeemer in his pardoning mercy, his purifying spirit, and in the glory soon to be revealed in its fullness and its eternity. It is an argument for religion, that it ends well. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." The prophet's prayer finds an echo in every heart not lost to hope and heaven. Who that looks upon a dying scene, where Christianity wreathes the pale face with smiles of rapture, and inspires the failing tongue to utter its last articulations in the dialect of heaven, does not breathe from the inmost soul the wish—even so may I meet the last enemy?

In life, being strong in faith, we give glory to God; so in the final struggle He is glorified in us and by us. "These all died in faith." immortal record! epitaph of the good, and interpreter of their doom. Living and dying, "we are the Lord's"—His property—absolutely, in every change, walking upon the earth and sleeping upon its bosom. He made us, and He loves us. He is "not ashamed to be called" our God. Life, probation, and death, are all ministers employed by Him

to do us good. If He prolong our days, it is that we may serve Him and our generation by the will of God. If He afflicts us, it is "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. If He call us hence, it is that we may "see Him as He is, and be like him forever." Our bodies may inhabit the house appointed for all the living, and our very name perish from the records of time, but He looks down and "watches all our dust till He shall bid it rise." We are the Lord's—the jewels of his kingdom, and the travail of his soul. He hath said it, and it shall stand fast—"They shall be mine"—"Because I live, they shall live also." "We are the Lord's." Let us rejoice in our relationship, and walk worthy of our high descent and our immortal destiny.

The principle and spirit of the text were beautifully exemplified in the life and death of our beloved brother, Bishop Capers. I have never known a man of more simple, single-hearted, uncalculating devotion. Born of God while yet a youth, his life was consecrated unreservedly to the service of Christ and his Church. Through all the changes of his career, youth, maturity and age; single, married, and surrounded by sons and daughters; on circuits, stations and districts; a deacon, an elder and a bishop; he exhibited the same steady, onward devotion; a man of God, of faith, of zeal. His steadfast purpose never faltered; no change of fortune modified the entireness of his dedication; no accumulation of cares relaxed his efforts to do good. He lived unto the Lord. Absence from home might entail loss, afflict feeling, tax affection; no matter, he had set his heart within him to finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. On more than one occasion he might have secured to his family a home rich in comforts, and to himself honors and emoluments, by separating himself from the itinerancy he loved, and consenting to serve a people who proved their esteem by the largeness of their offered liberality. But attached to our Church and its economy by conviction and choice, salary was no temptation to leave it, or even to modify his relation to it; and, in the face of all the sacrifices and privations and labors of a travelling Methodist preacher, he declined a city home and a well-filled purse.

My acquaintance with our dear departed brother (I ought to call him father) began while I was but a boy, and he was in the meridian of his strength, and the blaze of a renown such as few attain. The

impressions made upon me then by his humble manner, his sanctified conversation, and his unwearied labors, were fully justified by the familiarity of intercourse in after years. He seemed to me to be dead to the world, its gains and honors, and alive only to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. While his name was upon every tongue, and crowds were rushing from appointment to appointment, and the whole country was in a fever of curiosity and admiration, he seemed to shrink from fame; and the exultation by which a common mind and a common heart would have been lifted up, in his case was lost in an overwhelming sense of the responsibility his position entailed. He was one of the very few men I have known who was not injured in his piety and preaching by great popularity. To seek popularity as an object, in a minister is a crime—to bear it meekly when it comes unsought, is a virtue of rarest value.

This virtue characterized, distinguished Wm. Capers in the freshness of his youth, the glory of his noon, and in the mellow ripeness of his sanctified old age. He was clothed with humility. It was his beauty and his strength. The praise even of the lowly oppressed him. Courted and caressed by the rich, the great, the mighty in the land, he shrunk from their embrace, lest he might seem to others to be seeking great things for himself. His faith was never hindered by seeking the honor of men; his fidelity never compromised by the adulation of the Church or the world. Who ever heard him tell of the mighty works he had done; the great sermons he had preached; the wondrous revivals he had carried on? Who ever saw in his air the conceit of success, or detected in his language the self-gratulation of a praiseworthy deed? He was not the hero of his narratives, nor did he talk to make the simple wonder, or the great admire. Like Paul, whose visit to the third heaven was kept a secret for fourteen years, and revealed at last only to vindicate his apostleship, he said but little of his own experience, save in the retirement of private life, to the ear of intimate companionship. Astonishingly fluent, he talked much, but always well. He never forfeited in private the reputation he had made in public. Cheerful without levity, and easy without familiarity, he never degraded the minister into the trifler, nor reproached the sanctity of his profession by foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient. As a man, his nature was alive and gushing with all noble, generous impulses; kind, affectionate, full of sympathy, he rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and wept with them

that wept. In his family, gentle without weakness, and fond without improper indulgence. His wife, herself a model woman, revered while she loved, and honored while she served. His children, feeling themselves favored of Heaven in the virtues of such a father, obeyed his commands, consulted his wishes, and felt his smile to be a meed and a recompense. No man loved his children more. He regretted in the last hour that so few of them were present, and yet rejoiced that he had seen them so recently. Lovely family—children honored in their parents, and parents honored in their children. God's best blessing continue with them to the latest generation!

It is not amiss to say that Bishop Capers was in manners a gentleman, bland, courtly, refined. In him the polish of the courtier and the simplicity of the saint beautifully blended. His politeness did not consist in the formalities and ceremonies which, in certain circles, are dignified as the insignia of the well-bred and the fashionable; but it was the outgushing of a heart which knew no rule but the promptings of its own benevolence. It was the outward expression of an inward disposition; a mode of action which a loving spirit instinctively prescribed; the free, untaught, unconstrained operation of Christian courtesy. In the parlor and the pulpit, the street and the sanctuary, he was minutely regardful of the proprieties of life; and while the simplest rustic found no affectation, the fastidious critic discovered no fault.

I must not omit to mention his excellence in prayer. Whether we consider his power as a gift or a grace, he surpassed most men. In his devotions there was so much of the evangelical element, that a heathen man might have learned the plan of salvation from any one of his public exercises. On his knees he knew nothing but Christ. The cross was his all-prevailing plea. He urged it with fervor, affection, and faith. He was himself an intercessor, filled with yearning sympathies for his fellow-men. And sometimes his power with God would remind us of Jacob and the Angel—of Israel and his blessing.

To describe him as a preacher belongs rather to his biographer than to the sketch of a funeral discourse. He was a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God; an able minister of the New Testament. He brought forth out of his treasure things new and old. Rich in thought, fertile in matter, there was no sameness in his discourses, even when he preached from the same text—which he often did. I never heard him use the same illustration twice, or falter for a word. Copious in

language, apt in selection, and inexhaustible in variety, he was always ready and always new. It is difficult to classify his style as a preacher. His sermons were not essays nor expositions, nor were they narratives with reflections interspersed, nor yet topical exactly; still, all these, except the first, were sometimes mingled by him. Perhaps the word textual will fit his manner best. His sermons grew out of his texts, not by formal divisions, but by an artistic development, a verbal evolution of their meaning. Under his peculiar management, many a verse or passage to the untrained eye dark, or at least obscure, became instructive, beautiful, most interesting. Gifted with wonderful versatility and readiness, he excelled all I ever knew in adapting his text and discourse, on a sudden call, to all that was peculiar on the occasion. He often awakened attention by the announcement of a verse which none but he would ever have chosen. In this, however, he was not fanciful or eccentric, but simply obeyed the impulse of a mind unique in its conceptions and modes of thought. In thought, language, style, he was original, yet without eccentricity; called no man master, and yet violated no rule of the books; always accurate, always simple, but elegant in his simplicity. His sermons were often ornate; but there was no florid coloring; no exuberance; no glare. There was a delightful propriety, a minute beauty, a neat, chaste, graceful arrangement of every part. His flowers were not artificial; they all had roots, and they were redolent with the morning dew; fresh and fragrant as a vernal garden in the early day.

It is but just to say that his pulpit efforts were very unequal; yet in his driest, darkest moods, he was William Capers—all the mental characteristics of the man stood forth; a familiar acquaintance could not fail to recognize them. He possessed the singular faculty of speaking with fluency, grace, and propriety, when his mind was barren and empty, and his hearers listened well pleased, even when they got nothing to carry away. But at other times he was transfigured —his very form dilated—his eye beamed with celestial beauty, soft with the light of love, yet radiant with the joy of his rapt and ravished spirit, and his voice, mellowed by emotion, spell-bound while it inspired the hearing multitude. When the Spirit of the Lord God was upon him—when the angel touched his lips with a coal from the altar—oh! he was a charming preacher. I have heard him when the consolations of the gospel distilled from his tongue as honey from the rock, and the message of salvation came down like the angelic

song upon the shepherds of Bethlehem. Anon I have seen him clothe himself with terrible majesty, as when a prophet proclaimed the vengeance of the Almighty, and then the thunder of the violated law pealed from his lips like the trump of doom, and the pallid, awe-struck assembly told that the preacher had power with God and prevailed with men. For the mourner in Zion, the grief-stricken, the bowed, the desolate, he had the tongue of the learned and the heart of a seraph. Oh! the pathos of his sympathy—how touching and tender! It was a healing oil, a soothing balsam: beneath its magic charm, desolation bloomed and tears were turned to rapture. Many a wayworn pilgrim, weary with life's heavy burdens, faint, yet pursuing with faltering steps, felt his hopes revive and his courage grow strong while this "old man eloquent" discoursed of providence, and grace, and heaven—of the cross, the mercy-seat, and the crown of life. These were the themes on which he loved to dwell: they were the rejoicing of his heart, and the staple of his ministry. But the harp is broken, and all its music gone. The pleasant voice is hushed, and he who played so well upon that wondrous instrument, the human tongue, lies low in cold obstruction and dumb forgetfulness. Bishop Capers is no more. His place at the council-board of the Church he loved is empty. The pulpit shall know him no more for ever. The grave's dark eclipse rests upon that beaming face, and that venerable form, that moved among us but a little while ago—shrouded, coffined, buried, sleeps in death—thank God, in Jesus too—awaiting the descent of the judgment angel and the revelation of the Son of man.

The circumstances of his decease have been so widely published—are so generally known—that I need not detail them now. Suffice it to say, that having finished his last episcopal tour, visited his children, he returned to his quiet home, to rest for a season in the bosom of his family. Oh! the sober bliss, the grateful joy, of such a meeting! It was a mercy that allowed him this last interview. Death found the soldier in his tent, recruiting for another campaign. At midnight the spoiler came. The sleeping household were roused by the trembling cry of the wife, the mother, in the agony of her alarm. They rushed to the good man's chamber, and found him sitting up, but writhing in pain. "Make my blood circulate," he said. They essayed the task, but failed. Seeing their alarm, and feeling that his end was nigh, he said, "I am already cold, and now, my precious children, give me up to God. Oh that more of you were here! but

I bless God that I have so lately seen you all." But see how principle, and duty, and devotion to the Church, worked at the last and to the last. Bathed in the dew of mortality, enduring untold agony, longing for the faces of those he loved, gasping in death, he said, "Mary, I want you to finish my minutes to-morrow, and send them off." Duty was his law in life—his watchword at the gate of death. Partially relieved by the physician's skill and the power of medicine, he asked the hour. When told, he exclaimed, "What! only three hours since I have been suffering such torture! Only three hours! What must be the voice of the bird that cries Eternity! Eternity! Three hours have taken away all but my religion." Health gone, strength gone, hope gone, life almost gone; but religion abides steadfast and stronger. Retreating from the shore where stand wife, children, and friends, waving their last adieu, but my religion goes with me. All the foundations of earth are failing me, but my religion still towers amid the general wreck, securely firm, indissolubly sure. Glory to God for such a testimony from such a man!

For a little while nature seemed to rally—the king of terrors to relent. His children retired to rest at his urgent entreaty. On the morning of the 29th of January, he proposed to rise and dress himself, and insisted that his devoted wife should seek repose. She reminded him of the doctor's prescription, and besought him to keep his bed. He took the medicine, drank freely of water, pillowed his head upon his arm, and breathed his last.

"So fades a summer cloud away,
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er,
So gently shuts the eye of day,
So dies a wave along the shore.

Life's duty done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load, the spirit flies,
While heaven and earth combine to say,
How blessed the righteous when he dies!"

In the history of our honored, beloved brother, there is no vice to deplore and no error to lament. I say not that he was perfect; but I do say, a world of such men would liken earth to heaven. I say not that he had no infirmities, no human frailties; but I do say that his self-sacrificing spirit, his humble, holy, useful labors, his unwearied zeal, and his spotless example, are to his descendants a noble patrimony, and to the Church a priceless heritage. Alive, he was a dem-

onstration of the power and truth of Christianity; being dead, he yet speaketh, proclaiming to all that God is faithful. He left all and followed Christ, but never lacked any good thing. Counting all things but loss that he might win Christ, God gave him friends and fame, honor and usefulness. A messenger of God, his visits were blessings. The country admired him, and the Church loved him. His death fell like a shadow upon many a hearthstone, and his native State became a valley of weeping. Cities struggled for the honor of his burial, and Methodism, in mourning, repeats his funeral, to prolong her grief and consecrate his memory. Oh, brethren! we have lost a friend, a brother, an advocate, an example, a benefactor. Earth is growing poorer. There is now less faith, less zeal, less love in the world. The righteous are perishing; the good are taken away. Oh, ye venerable fathers of the Church, contemporaries and fellow-laborers of the ascended Capers, your ranks are broken. The friends of your youth are gone, and, relics of a generation well-nigh past, ye still linger among us. God bless you: we love you much, but we cannot keep you much longer. Your sands are running low, your change is at hand. You, venerable sir,* are almost the only bond that binds the preacher and his congregation to the pioneers of Methodism in this broad country. That bond, fretted and worn by more than threescore years and ten, is well-nigh threadless, attenuated, and ready to break. But God is with you. The raven hair, the ruddy cheek, the vigorous arm, the enduring strength, are gone —all gone; but *your religion, too*, thank God, is left you. Leaning upon that staff, you are waiting your summons. Heaven bless you with a smiling sunset, a pleasing night, and a glorious morn. And you, hoary veterans of the cross—one and all—heroes of a glorious strife, remnants of an army slain and yet victorious, if we survive when ye are gone, how bereaved and solitary our lot! But ye are going: the wrinkled brow, the furrowed cheek, the halting step respond, Yes, we are going. Pray for us while you live, and bless us when you die.

And you, brethren, middle-aged and young, let us imitate the example, catch the spirit, of our glorified brother and fellow-laborer. He felt himself a debtor to the wise and the unwise. The white man, the Indian, and the negro, all shared his counsel, his labors, his

*Bishop Soule.

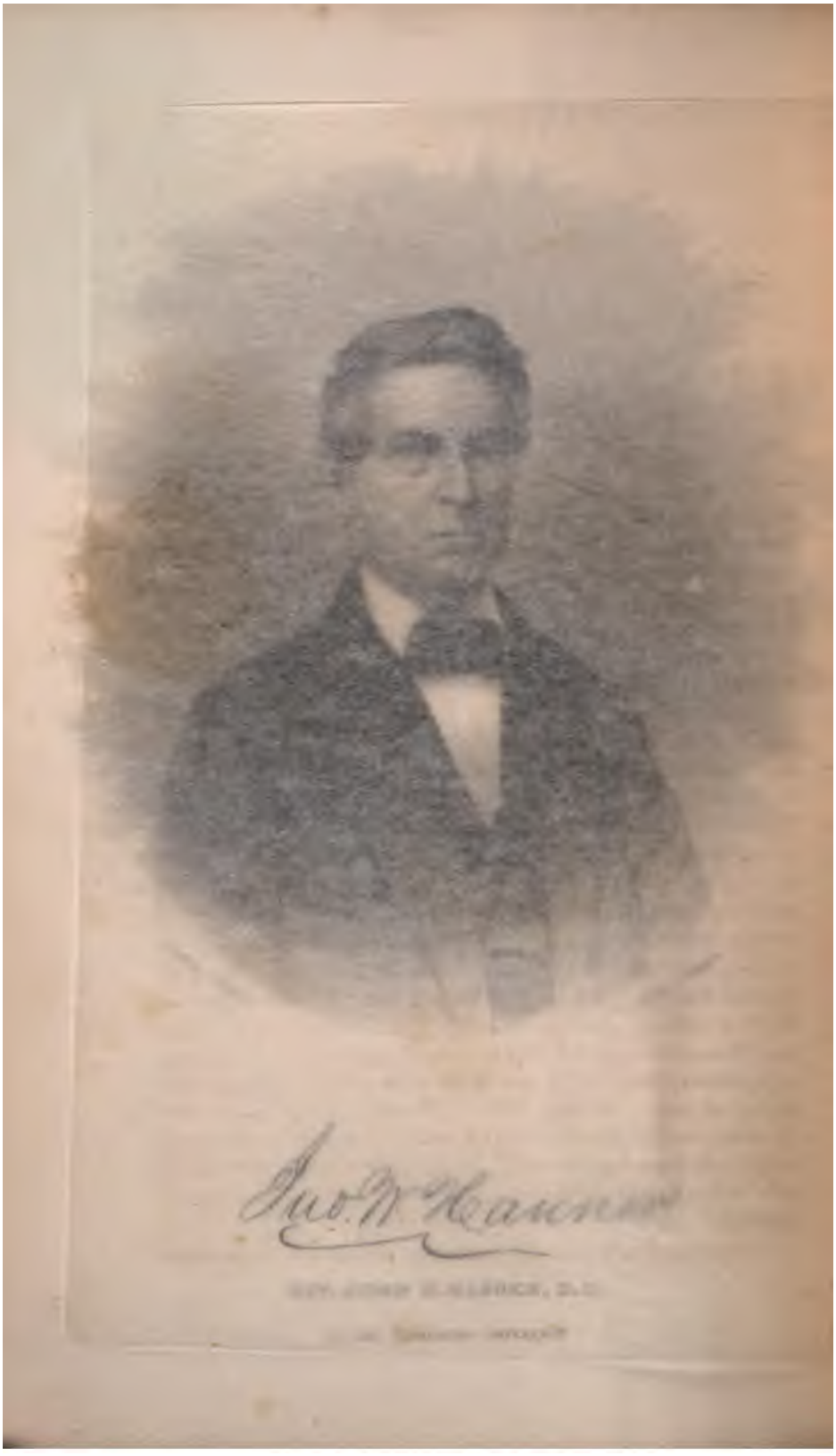
sympathy, and his prayers. The white fields are yet ungathered, and the strongest reapers are falling. The mournful event we commemorate cries, Go work to-day in the Lord's vineyard. This is our duty, and ought to be our only business. We are here, as officers and ministers of our branch of the Church, to inaugurate our great missionary and publishing interests under new auspices. But the cold shadow of death falls darkly upon our council-chamber. Its presence is a warning. We have home-interests we may not live to supervise; there are plans of usefulness we may not help to execute; for we too are passing away. What we do must be done quickly. Let us live unto the Lord; let us live unto the Lord more than ever; let us be more prompt, self-denying and laborious. Let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. What we lay out he will repay. Amid our toil, inconveniences, and trials, be this our consolation—"We are the Lord's." If we live till our physical powers decay, the dim eye may still read our title clear; on Jesus' bosom we may lean the hoary head, and in death's sad struggle feel our kind Preserver near. God will not love us less because "the strong men bow themselves," and "the keepers of the house tremble." His love endureth forever. His claim is undeniable—his title indisputable. The grave's effacing fingers cannot mutilate the handwriting. Time's ponderous wheel, as it grinds the world to dust on its march to judgment, cannot destroy the record. "A book of remembrance is written before Him" safe beyond the desolations of earth, and the triumphs of the sepulchre. Heeding, then, the solemn providence which bids us weep a brother deceased, let us go forth bearing precious seed, sowing beside all waters,—we shall rest, and stand in our lot at the end of the days. "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Living and dying, dead and buried, we are His—His when we rise, His when heaven and earth are fled and gone, His in the New Jerusalem, for ever and forever.

"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the vict'ry won,
Enter thy Master's joy."
The voice at midnight came:
He started up to hear:
A mortal arrow pierced his frame,
He fell,—but felt no fear.

Tranquil amid alarms,
It found him on the field,
A vet'ran slumb'ring on his arms,
Beneath his red-cross shield.
His sword was in his hand,
Still warm with recent fight,
Ready that moment, at command,
Through rock and steel to smite.

At midnight came the cry.
"To meet thy God prepare!"
He woke,—and caught his Captain's eye;
Then, strong in faith and prayer,
His spirit, with a bound,
Left its encumb'ring clay:
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground,
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.
Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy.


Jno. N. Hancock

ANGELIC STUDY.

BY JOHN W. HANNER, D. D.,
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"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Peter i, 12.

There are no gaps or chasms in the creation of God. All its parts are admirably connected together, making up one universal, harmonious whole. There is a chain of beings, from the lowest to the highest point—from a sand-grain to an archangel. This scale of being advances not by leaps, but by smooth and gentle degrees. Although we may not be able to note accurately the degrees by which this scale is graduated, yet in a gross and general way we may begin with inorganical particles of water and earth, and ascend, through minerals, vegetables, insects, beasts, and men, to angels. Of angels, however, we know nothing but by divine revelation. The crude notion which ancient heathens had of this order of intelligences was doubtless derived from tradition—bent and broken rays of light from God's original communications to man—scattered over the world. This order of being they placed between God and man. The Greeks called them *demons*—that is, *knowing ones;* the Romans named them *genii* and *lares*. Socrates had his good demon, or angel, that gave him notice in the morning of any evil which would befall him during the day. On the day he was condemned to drink the hemlock, he says: "My demon did not give me notice this morning of any evil that was to befall me to-day; therefore I cannot regard as any evil my being condemned to die." There is in this scrap of profane history a strange and deep spirituality, that must be interesting to a reflecting mind. It is one of the most earnest and wonderful sayings of uninspired man. Who but an angel of God could have been the *knowing one* that revealed beneficial secrets to the great mind of the sage, honestly struggling for light amid the darkness of the heathen world? What a Godsend would the Bible have been to that man!

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable

for doctrine and instruction." It is one of the excellences of this revelation, that it supplies us with information concerning those things and rational beings which our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard. Among these revelations the existence of angels is not the least important. Although the Bible may not reveal enough on this subject to gratify our insatiable curiosity, yet it reveals enough for our faith, enough for our comfort. Does it teach us their existence? It teaches, also, that the burden of their song is praise to God, and that they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, battling under the clouds of earth and time.

As to the *nature* of angels, they are spirits, not clogged with flesh and blood as we are. Their bodies, if they have any, are not earthly, gross, and gravitating like ours; but of finer substance, ethereal—resembling flame more than any object of which we have knowledge. This is probably intimated by the Psalmist: "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." They either have bodies, or power to condense the atmosphere, to collect vapor around them, or in some other way make themselves visible to mortals; for they have been seen of men. They are indued with understanding, will, affections, and liberty. These attributes are essential to the existence of spirit, if indeed they do not constitute its essence. What are we to think of the *understanding* of an angel? Who can conceive the extent of his knowledge? What should hinder one from seeing the very thoughts as they rise in our hearts? Not the thin veil of flesh and blood can intercept the view of an angel. Massive walls are no obstruction to his piercing glance, no more than unopposing space of open air. Can we read a man's thoughts in his face? Far more easily can an angel read them in our minds, forasmuch as they can see the spirit more clearly than we can see the body. Much of the past and present they doubtless comprehend, but the future sets limits to the extent of their knowledge. They know not the day nor the hour of Christ's second coming. Notwithstanding this limit, the extent of their knowledge, the degree of their wisdom is inconceivable. How amazing must have been its increase during the last five thousand years, resulting from an employment of their mighty understanding and the lofty faculties with which they were originally endowed, in surveying the ways and hearts of men through successive generations, and by observing and studying the works of

God, creation, providence, redemption! And, above all, "beholding the face of their Father!"

The *strength* of angels—how astonishing is this! One of them, and a fallen one, could raise a whirlwind to level Job's house with the dust, and destroy all his children at once. A single angel passed through the Syrian camp, and slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers in a night—perhaps in an hour, a moment. The strength of an angel, implied in the slaughter of the first-born of man and beast in the populous and fruitful land of Egypt, is prodigious. Nor is his speed less so. The four angels of the Revelation, one standing at each "corner of the earth," had power to hold in check and confine the winds of heaven.

Their *number* is indefinite, countless. There are myriads upon myriads of them, peopling heaven and ranging the wide realms of their Creator's universe. They are the model patterns of our obedience: "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." As fellow-students, they desire to look into the things of our salvation.

1. *What things form the subject of Angelic Study?*

The subject itself is the grace of God to man, in the world's redemption through Jesus Christ. Peter divides this subject into two parts, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." It was long a subject of prophetical investigation, employing the minds of men under the inspiration of the spirit of Christ, and demanding the closest and most diligent research from those who bore witness to it. Clearly impressed with its superiority over every thing in their dispensation, they inquired of one another, and searched the sacred writings as men would search for gold hid in the sand or embedded in rocks deep down in the earth, that they might ascertain the nature, time and manner of this wonderful display of God's love to man.

"God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets;" and though the superiority of our privilege is undoubted and incalculable, yet we have not lost our interest in the wondrous mode of teaching vouchsafed to the ancient Church, nor have angels lost theirs. There is a harmonious connection between prophets and angels in this great investigation. The plan of redemption is God's. It originated in his infinite mind, was arranged by his wisdom, cherished by his love, and manifested to the

world in due time by his Son. In the mean time, types, sacrifices, priests, kings, and a succession of prophets to strike the harp of sacred song with inspired impulse, in hymning the advent, sufferings, and subsequent glory of the Saviour, were employed to awaken and keep awake the attention of men and the expectation of the world till Jesus himself appeared. Thus the faith of good men was upheld and maintained, and their desires thrown forward to future ages, when the better things for which they hoped should be made manifest. O, with what intensity were these things studied! It was thus they were "searching what, or what time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

It may be the prophets themselves, in many instances, did not understand their own predictions. They had a general view of God's design, but may have studied particular details in their own prophetic declarations. They describe the sufferings of Christ as a man of sorrows, under circumstances that leave them no paralel in the history of human wo; suffering as a SUBSTITUTE, not for himself or his friends, but for a world of enemies. They also foretold that these sufferings should be a remedy wide as the posterity of Adam and deep as the corruption of human nature. And finally, that they should bear to the faithful in every age an absolute efficacy in pardoning and cleansing from sin. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The iniquity of us all was made to meet in him, as all the rivers meet in the sea. The *punishment* due to us all was laid on Him. This is the first division of the great subject of angelic study. The next is the glory that should follow upon or rise out of the sufferings of Christ.

Not the glory of an earthly conquerer, built upon the carcasses of the slain, coming fresh from the field of carnage, reeking with the blood of his fellows, sending forth his heralds to trumpet his praise as he rides in a triumphal chariot amid the shouts of a venal soldiery; but the glory of a deliverer, an almighty hero, who shed his own blood for the salvation of his enemies, coming from a field of strife piled with the ruins of death, hell, and the grave, lauded by the choral anthems of angelic hosts. The glory of saving men's souls. Not the glory of his resurrection and ascension only, but of his followers and companions. Like branches from a parent stock, and streams from a fountain, partaking of the nature of the stock and

fountain, so they partake of the nature of Christ, and conform themselves in heart and life to his glory.

The glory also of the ministry of reconciliation, established and perpetuated by Him. Neither the light of nature nor the law of Sinai could teach the doctrine of pardon, but in Jesus justice and mercy meet together.

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares a creature guess
> Which of the glories brighter shone—
> The justice or the grace."

God is just; man is guilty. God is pure; man is polluted. God is love; "the carnal mind is enmity against God." How can they be reconciled? Nature and law only stir up the opposition, and put the parties farther asunder. Jesus came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and to publish the glorious doctrine that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Whether young or hoary-headed, rich or poor, sick or in health, we may now be reconciled to God, and saved.

The glory of regenerating the human heart and human character. Man is a sinner; not only guilty as an inexcusable violator of divine law, but depraved in his moral nature, bereft of the divine image. He is earthly, sensual, devilish; in body a brute, in mind a ruined demon. This may sound harsh in your ears, for the reason that you have seen human nature in its best estate only. Could you see it in its homely, uneducated condition, roaming through the forest, thirsting for blood, dancing on the enchanted ground, practicing witchcraft, or revelling in a pagan bacchanal, the strongest terms would seem too weak to depict fully its degradation. What makes you to differ from others of your race? The gospel of Christ. But for this you would have been the same that they are. That there is a regenerating power for man, a spiritual resurrection to spiritual life, is a truth at which Jews wonder and Gentiles too. This regeneration is radical and thorough, and if preserved and perfected will issue in lifting up and making immortal and blessed our entire humanity.

Once more. The glory of bringing innumerable souls to heaven. "Through suffering he designed to bring many souls to glory." Millions have already gone; millions more are on their way, and if it please God to let this system go on a few centuries longer, millions

more will follow to swell the song in heaven, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory." As yet the world does not glorify God. The glory due to his name is given to idols and vanities, to men and their works, to wealth and ease and pleasure. The idea of glorifying God never enters the minds of besotted and imbruted thousands, and even the mind of multitudes professing religion. Worship is paid and songs are sung in the dark and evil land, but neither is offered to God nor designed to glorify Him. Where the gospel mission is accomplished, the work of divine religion done, the scene is different. God will then be glorified in the mighty moral change which shall be presented by a regenerated world on its way to heaven; in the exaltation and universal dominion of Jesus over the nations; in the spread and triumph of his truth, and in all nature. God's glory will be seen in all—in every shower that falls, in every plant that grows, in every, in all objects by which his regenerated human worshippers are surrounded. The great plan is at work. God is in it; men are employed it; angels are interested in it; it is moving, advancing to completion—constantly bringing new glory to God, new blessings to man; all is intense anxiety, spirit-piercing interest; and when all shall be accomplished according to the promise of Omnipotence, both men and angels will be inspired and thrilled with eternal admiration and love.

2. *What is implied in the desire of angels to look into these things?*

First.—*Profound attention.* *Parakupsai*, "stooping down to," represents them in the posture of those who are earnestly intent on finding out a thing. For example, a difficult and mysterious writing: bending, "*poring*" over it. The same word is used to describe the attitude of the disciples at the sepulchre: "stooping down, they looked in."

The allusion here is to the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, with its lid of gold, or "mercy seat," and cherubim bending down and covering it with their wings. That was an illustrious type of the propitiation made by the Son of God. The ark was an oblong chest containing the tables of the law; over these was placed the lid or covering, the "mercy seat," and also called "the throne of grace," and over this the sculptured cherubim, representations of the angelic

host, and between their outstretched wings shadowing the propitiatory was the visible glory of Jehovah. The design of bringing together all these different objects into one great symbol must have been to teach us that there are important relations between the administration of grace to man on earth and the heavenly world, and that there is a close connection between all the dispensations and arrangements of the great plan of redemption. The very forms under which some scriptures represent the cherubim, are the symbols of intelligence, strength, courage, endurance and activity, "the face of a man, a lion, ox, eagle." But here they are brought before us as fixing their intent gaze upon the "THRONE OF GRACE," desiring to comprehend the things represented by the Ark of the Covenant, the approach of guilty man to God seated upon the throne of mercy, that man may obtain mercy and find grace to help him in time of need.

Angels are beings of astonishing intelligence. Over the vast fields of science, where man proceeds with much difficulty so tardily, and he has never traveled at all, they fly with ease. To them nature is an open space; they can wing their way from one world to another, and sweep over the wide domain of universal creation. They are permitted to watch the changes of earth and its scenes, and to note the entire progress of the vast schemes of Providence, a part of which, "a little part alone, we scan." But over whatever other sights their view ranges, there is one that fixes their gaze. There they stay their flight, and bending down with profound attention, they look into the peculiarities of the gospel, which worldly wisdom accounts foolishness. Nearly two thousand years have rolled away since Jesus suffered, and still they "*desire* to look into these things," not having yet comprehended them. When I permit my imagination to wander away from the naked facts of the record, I seem to see them profoundly studying, with bending gaze and knit brow, these high mysteries for a thousand years, and then they lift up their heads a moment and then add another thousand years of study, and lifting up their heads again, exclaim, "O the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Learn on, high-born students of God Almighty's wonders! The universe is your text-book—eternity the period of your tuition! Poor witlings of earth, what is your whole stock of learning compared with the knowledge of angels, gained by

the study of thousands of years, without the interruption of sleep or languor, gathered from a survey of God's works and ways without the fogs of earth and sin and clogs of flesh and blood? Yours is nothing but elements, shreds and scraps gleaned from fictions and newspapers; and you will not believe the mysteries of redemption *because* you cannot comprehend them! Instead of cavilling, we should, with angels, believe, love, obey.

Secondly.—Their desire implies adoring *wonder*. Not only the head bowed in profound attention, but the sidelong glance over the lid of the ark seems to say: Stupendous gift of God to man! "Though he was rich, yet for their sakes he became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich." And then, "He hath given them exceeding great and precious promises whereby they might be partakers of the divine nature."

Angels had seen their fallen companions "passed by," their fellows who had sinned cast down from God and heaven, and no Christ was promised to them; no gospel proclaimed peace in hell and good will to devils, and fearful to them did the evil of sin appear. Must they not wonder and adore over the scheme of man's redemption; over the mysterious agony of the garden and the cross; over the suffering of the Great Victim, who died to put away sin and bring myriads upon myriads of souls to glory?

They also, doubtless, wonder at the opposition this system encounters in the world. The race of man is fallen; the whole race has been redeemed. All are diseased; there is one remedy, and but one, for all. The rejection of this remedy is ruin—utter and irremedial ruin—and but few are disposed to avail themselves of it, while multitudes resist the grace of God. When will this foul reproach be washed away from all the world, and salvation be its common heritage?

3. *The Probable Motives of Angelic Study.*

These can only be conjectured from their nature and relations.

They delight in knowledge. Being pure spirits, unencumbered with flesh and blood, the salvation of man must be to them a subject of intellectual interest. Every new display of Divine wisdom and glory must give them a new pleasure. The advent of the Saviour was their joy; they sang it in strains of heavenly music. His resurrection and ascension added fresh anthems to their praise.

The progress and development of the whole plan of salvation have added new stores to their knowledge. "Unto me," says Paul, "the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; to the intent that now, unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." There is in this passage a collateral reference to the knowledge of angels; and the knowledge thus acquired surely ministers to their happiness as well as to their holiness. Of all other knowledge it seems best fitted to do so. It would seem that their bright lamps burn brighter when fed by oil from Christianity. They are called "seraphim"—that is, *burners*. They are compared to a flame of fire. They not only shine with light, but burn with zeal. The gospel reveals God to man; they love it—delight in its study; it brings glory to God—they glory in it. They praise God, and love *to* praise God.

Another motive may be, the large *moral benefit* accruing to them from this study.

That they need no redemption we know, for they have not fallen; and if any moral benefit flow to them from this scheme, it is not in the way of direct redemption. Yet it is easy to see, that if to any being already pure, brighter views of God and higher degrees of moral knowledge be communicated, such communication must always be an instrument of increase both of holiness and felicity. And it is as easy to show that there are great subjects connected with the history of our redemption, with which angels can become better acquainted than they ever could have been had there been no redemption. They were deeply impressed with God's power when they witnessed the wonders of creation—when *nothing* heard the voice of God, and was substantiated into the goodly fabric of the universe. Then they shouted for joy. But here was nothing to resist—all was passive.

> "'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
> 'Twas greater to redeem."

In redemption they have seen bad principles subdued and eradicated, alien and resisting hearts won back to God, and sin and uncleanness washed away by the blood of the cross. They had seen the virtue of holiness in each other, and knew what it was in the abstract; but this was a ray of brightness in the element of light. By the power of grace in man they had seen the virtue of holiness exhibited and maintained in a corrupt world—a beam of light shining in

a dark place. Here they see virtue in action, which they had before contemplated only in the abstract. They had witnessed bright and vast displays of the love of God; but they had never beheld love so embodied and realized as in the gift of the Son of God for man's salvation—love teaching, travailing, toiling, suffering, dying, rising, ascending, but to return in teeming showers of richest blessing on man, that he might not perish; and the triumphs of victorious grace in men, subduing their own nature, resisting temptation, bearing up under crosses, forgiving injuries, sustaining afflictions with patience, and believing against hope. They have witnessed prisoners for Christ's sake rejoicing in bonds, and singing at midnight the praise of God; they have looked upon the meekness of the martyr, and listened as he prayed for his murderers; they have admired his constancy in torments, and the cheerfulness and triumph with which he hailed reproach and welcomed the cross of Christ. And can they behold such scenes and hear such sounds (which they never could have seen and heard but for redemption) without moral benefit?

A third motive may be their benevolence toward us. They wish us well, and delight to attend the heirs of salvation. Benevolent beings are angels. How much they are interested for us, and what they are able and willing to do, we learn from the Bible. God has always employed them in the affairs of his government over this world. I know this infidel and jovial age scoffs at the doctrine of supernatural interposition, as far below the wisdom of human philosophy, while in fact it is far above it.

When God expelled man from Eden, an angel guarded the gateway to the Tree of Life When Jacob committed himself and his interests to God in prayer, angels descended and ascended his ladder of vision reaching from earth to heaven—binding the footstool to the throne. When Egypt's first-born must be smitten, an angel's hand gives the blow. When Daniel was to be preserved among the lions, an angel is there to shut their mouths. When Herod would destroy the infant Jesus, an angel puts Joseph on his flight to a place of safety. When Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel strengthens him; and when he is dying on the cross, forsaken of his friends and insulted by his foes, amid the lonely desertion and darkness of that hour they spread their hovering wings around his sinking head, and leave him not till the mortal pang is past. It was an angel that rolled the stone from the door of his sepulchre, and saw

the light of immortality for the human body when first it flashed forth from the vacated tomb of the risen Jesus. Angels were with him on the mount of ascension, lingered awhile in the shining wake of his passage to heaven, and returned to the gazing men of Galilee, with intelligence of what took place beyond the cloud which had veiled him from their vision, and with assurances of his coming again, in like manner.

God's cause and God's people are still in the world. Angels take an interest in these. When a missionary was called to go out with the word of the Lord, he inquired, "Who shall go with me!" "An angel," was the Divine answer. They were with Moses, with the prophets, and apostles; they are with all pious souls in strife. Is a preacher in prison?—angels are there. They delivered Peter, Paul, and John. Is the preacher discouraged?—do his hands hang down? An angel touches his lips with a live coal from off the altar, and strengthens his hands. Is he successful?—angels are present; and when the word of God takes effect, intelligence is conveyed to heaven with more than telegraphic despatch, and "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Not all the joys of heaven can supersede the shout; its thundering volume fills the palace of their King.

Perhaps every christian has a guardian angel. It may be that there is one angel to every christian, or a score of them; or one may have charge of a score of christians. Some of the ancient fathers believed that every city had a guardian angel, while others assigned one to every house and every man. None of us know how much we are indebted to angels for our deliverance from imminent peril, disease, and malicious plots of men and devils. Where the pious die, angels are to carry the soul to heaven, though it be the soul of a Lazarus.

Finally.—Angels are witnessing the whole history of our world in its connection with the administration of grace and Providence, and are studying it with reference to the final issue, for their instruction and our good, as in the end they and the redeemed from the earth are to be associated in the kingdom of glory. Long has there been a grand struggle between light and darkness, truth and error, holiness and sin. It commenced in the case of "angels who kept not their first estate." In that case, however, I suppose the struggle was short, and the punishment of transgression summary and sudden;

for, though we may take our poetry, we are not to take our theology from Milton. We must not think there was a long war between the disaffected and the faithful in heaven. Where no grace is, sin is followed by immediate punishment; long-suffering belongs not to law—and but for the covenant of mercy with man, the present struggle would have terminated in the very day of transgression. The sinner, under the stroke of divine vengeance, would have sunk at once into the abodes of perdition, but through mercy the stroke was prolonged, and still continues. As it goes on important principles are established, truth receives fresh evidence every year, achieves new victories every day, and its entire history goes to show the folly and wickedness of rebellion against God, and the wisdom and piety of submission to Him. His service is the wisdom, duty, and interest of his creatures; and as no creature can so clearly perceive the force of truth in the abstract as when exhibited in action, probably angels feel all these truths more forcibly in consequence of seeing them and their practical results on the grand theatre of our world. We ourselves may learn much from the awful contest if we watch it faithfully, standing in the light of the Lord—much that will be highly instructive and of moral benefit. But our faculties are too weak; our range of view too limited; our opportunities and space of observation too few and brief, to allow us to study and comprehend the lessons presented as they are studied and comprehended by angels. When we join their assembly we shall share their advantages. They are watching the progress of the struggle with growing interest. The plans of Providence, like Ezekiel's wheels, are involved in perplexity and seeming counter movements; the clouds gather and break; alternate floods of light and shadows of darkness are poured upon the scene, and still they gaze on as the scheme is gradually and more clearly developed and the catastrophe nearer and nearer approaches. And what shall be their final song when the consummation arrives, and they part from the scene wiser and holier and happier? What their crowning joy but the outburst of that long repressed and high-wrought feeling which has struggled in their vast minds for so many ages, "Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

By reason of sin there is a repulsion between heaven and earth, angels and men. The death of Christ was designed to remove this and reconcile all, making them one in Jesus and heaven. Not only to reconcile God and his worshippers, but to reconcile the worshippers

with each other. Under this arrangement men are employed to assist men, that by mutual good offices they may endear themselves to each other in time and in eternity; and for the same reason angels are employed to assist men and have given to them a charge over us, to endear us and them together that our final and mutual joy may be the fuller and sweeter when we meet in our Father's kingdom. How delightful is the communion of saints on earth! It heightens the idea when we connect saints below with saints above, and recollect that to us all there is one God and Father. He is the Lord of Hosts. He has a host in the innumerable company of angels; a host in the company of redeemed men. "Part of the host have crossed the flood and part are crossing now;" and part are traveling through the wilderness, nearing every day the banks of the Jordan—the borders of the land of promise, but they are one sacramental host, going up by companies till they all appear in Zion before God. And this feeling of union with saints glorified, not only those we have known and loved on earth, and those whose triumph over death we witnessed, but all who have gone from the world; this feeling of union with them is heightened when we connect them with the angels of God. They are all one in Christ, so that in heaven all are our friends. And when we shall be dying in the Lord, kind angels will bend over our couch of suffering to fan with their loving wings our pale brow, and through the darkness sweetly smile upon our souls, as with them we rise into light, and from this world of strife ascend to a better, a brighter, and go into a friendly heaven, there to find our God, our family, our home.

Learn the infinite worth of the gospel. It is not a fable that fixes the attention of angels—"to the Greeks it was foolishness, to the Jews a stumbling-block; but to those that believe, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God." Jesus took not on him the nature of angels, but our nature, that through suffering he might bring us to glory. "Which things the angels desire to look into."

"My heart awake!—to feel is to be fired,
And to believe, Lorenzo, is to feel."

Edward Wadsworth

GOD AND MAN ARE CO-WORKERS IN THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

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"But we all, with open, face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii, 18.

In apprehending this declaration of Paul we must see the meaning of the phrases as they occur in regular order. "We all with open face," means with a face that is unveiled or uncovered, so that the rays of light may pass unobstructed and unchanged to the eyes. "Beholding as in a glass," means looking as one looks in a mirror. The gospel which contains the narration of the life of Jesus Christ the Lord, is, by a beautiful simile, represented as a well-made looking-glass, on whose even surface there is no crack or indentation, causing the rays of light to make an untrue figure or image of the object put before it. The vision here is clear and distinct. "The glory of the Lord" means the life of Christ, as developing infinite goodness, immaculate purity, consummate wisdom, perfect humility, and also the excellent doctrines taught by his ministry. These all present such beauty, and they are so perfectly shown in and by him, that they are appropriately called "the glory of the Lord." "Are changed into the same image," means the renewing of our minds by the Spirit of the Lord, for the same Spirit which dwelt in Christ now applies the truths of the gospel to human hearts, and changes our moral nature, and makes it like the nature of Jesus Christ. "From glory to glory," means that the change which is wrought in our conversion, by which we become "partakers of the divine nature," continues to advance from one degree to another, until the soul or spirit shall be fitted for translation to Heaven. The change wrought in us may be sudden, and perfect enough to cause our adoption into the family of God, because we are "born from above;" yet after this, there must be progression from infancy to the maturity of Christian manhood.

In this text we have a good representation of the work necessary

for salvation, because we see the part which the sinner has to do, and the part which the Holy Spirit has to do. Right discrimination between man's work in performing conditions and using means, and God's work in applying his grace and exerting his power, will help us much in working out our salvation. As we see men acting in the pursuits of agriculture, so we should act in the pursuit of salvation. The planter confines himself to his appropriate work in the use of natural means, and acts according to rule; and nature furnishes the seed, the soil, the rain, the sun's light and heat, and the atmosphere; and there results a valuable product. In seeking salvation, we must restrain our efforts within prescribed limits, and do our work according to rule, and then wait for and expect the Holy Spirit to do his work in "renewing us in the spirit of our minds." Our work is to perform conditions and use means, and *to do so with faith and hope*. This work has no merit, yet it is necessary, for we must "work out our own salvation."

In this exposition we propose to show,

I. What men have to do in order that they may be saved. This is expressed in the text thus: "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

First, as a man who looks at an image in a glass can study its form, color, symmetry, and so forth; and as a man who reads a book can study its contents; so the inquirer or seeker must study the record made in the gospel respecting Jesus Christ and the doctrines taught by his ministry. This must precede all true repentance and saving faith. In this study we learn our condition, our responsibility, our remedy, and the way in which we may use this remedy.

On this subject we have instruction in the parable of the sower. Of this parable we have three versions,* and we have also an interpretation of its doctrines by the great Teacher. It is designed to show us the right way of hearing the gospel, and it does this by classifying the hearers. There is a class of hearers who are represented by the *way-side*, which receives seed, but because it is trodden by men and has no fence around it, the seed do not take root, and are devoured by birds of the air. These are they who hear the word of the Kingdom and understand it not; then the devil cometh, immediately after they have heard, and taketh the seed out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Another class are represen-

* Matt. xiii, Mark iv, Luke viii

ted by the *stony ground* which was planted and showed signs of fruitfulness, but the sun arose in his strength and sent down his hot rays on the growing corn and burned it, because there was but little soil and no moisture. These are they who hear the word with joy and hold it for a season, but when temptation assails them and tribulation befalls them because of the word, they having no root in themselves become faithless and hopeless, and fall away and bring no fruit to perfection. A third class are represented by the ground which had in it the roots of thorns, and the seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. These are they who hear the word, and when they have heard go forth and "suffer the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, to enter in and choke the word," and make them unfruitful. A fourth class are represented by the good ground in which the seed sprang up and increased and brought forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. This class hear, understand, and receive the word in honest and good hearts, keep it with patience, and bear fruit. Let us mark the characteristics or the practice of these hearers. They hear the word, they understand it, they keep it in honest and good hearts, and *they are fruitful.* These are the hearers who will be saved; all others will be lost. These open their ears that they may hear, exercise their minds that they may understand, use their memories that they may hold fast, and arouse their hearts that they may believe what God hath revealed concerning his Son. The result is *fruitfulness*, in some thirty fold, and in others sixty, and in others an hundred fold. We have reason to expect this fruitfulness from all who hear the word in the way taught in this parable. "Take heed *how* you hear," "take heed *what* you hear," are the admonitions of him who "taught as one having authority."

We may form our opinion of the importance of this study of the facts and doctrines taught in the Bible, by the institutions which are operating around us. The command of Christ to his ministers to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" the organization of the Church by the Apostles, in which we see all the appliances for instruction in those things which make men wise unto salvation; the statement of Paul in these words, "Whom we preach warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; the record of his own valuation of this instruction in these words, "Yea, doubtless, and

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" the assurance he gives us of his faith, his safety, his humility, in these words, "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;" and the view of the greatness of the work he had to do in this: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;" all these indicate the work of instructing men in the things which contribute to their assimilation to the image of Jesus Christ.

As in the study of science and literature we are dependent on, and are accustomed to use, competent teachers; so in this study we should employ ministers of the gospel. In the Levitical dispensation of religion, God set apart the tribe of Levi for the work of teaching and ministering in holy things. In the dispensation which we now enjoy, men of religious experience and capacity to teach are called by the Holy Spirit and employed in the labor of preaching. The necessity and the value of their work, and the way of sending them, are taught in Matthew ix, 36, 38: "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd: then He said unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth more laborers into His harvest." Consider the figure used by Christ. Here is a field of wheat that has ripened and is ready for the reaper. Its green color has changed into a rich brown. The planter looks over his productive field, and his experienced eye marks the ripeness of the crop, and his judgment tells him that the harvest must be gathered promptly, or all the labor and money already spent on that field will be wasted. All other work must be stopped, sooner than the saving what has matured. Every laborer that is needed must be put in that field. The other products of the plantation which are growing, must be left to the contingencies of nature. The work of harvesting is done with more life and industry than the work of planting, and it is valued so highly that greater wages, if they be necessary, will be paid for it. This work of saving the matured grain is the simile used by Christ to

indicate the work of the preacher. Men engaged in other professions and trades are useful members of society; but the preacher of the gospel is the most useful. All the labor and expense attendant on educating men, and furnishing them with the conveniences of life, and defending them in their rights and privileges, will fail utterly in the production of happiness, unless their souls are brought under the power of the truth. They must know Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and Intercessor. They must "with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." They must approve His plan of saving sinners, and they must admire the beauty of His character until they desire earnestly to be changed into His image. These desires must be supreme in their minds, so as to make them willing to use all the means, and perform all the conditions of salvation. To produce this is the work of the preacher. He must preach Christ; Christ crucified; Christ raised from the dead; Christ in all His offices, all His doctrines, all His labors. The same Holy Spirit which dwelt in Christ's human body, has indited the narration contained in the gospel, has inspired the men who wrote the epistles, and now calls the preacher, and applies the truth which he preaches. The man who willingly, eagerly, penitently, prayerfully, opens his ears to hear, and applies his intellect to understand, shall behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Beholding, he will admire the glory of the Lord; admiring, he will desire to be changed into the same image; desiring, he will conquer himself and be willing to perform the conditions of salvation; willing, he will apply himself to the work of faith and obedience.

Secondly, as a man who looks at an image in a glass, and reads an instructive and truthful book, *believes* in the reality and truth of what he sees and reads, so the inquirer, who with open face beholds the glory of the Lord, must *believe* in Him whose glory he beholds. The justification of every sinner depends on his personal faith in Jesus Christ. The faith he exercises must influence his life, and this influence will be seen in case the believer shall admit into his heart the truthful doctrines taught by Jesus Christ.

The common mirror is a very wonderful instrument. Few instruments used by men are more wonderful. When it is made according to the rules which science of optics develops, and is adjusted in a room, it will create a perfect image of every person and article in that room. One who looks on its smooth surface may occupy a place

from which he can see nothing in the room but the mirror, and yet he may describe, with accuracy, every object reflected. Now the beholder sees nothing other than the images created by the mirror, yet he believes these images represent real objects. His faith amounts to assurance, and he knows the objects reflected have real existence. So we must believe that the events recorded in the gospel are facts; and that the doctrines taught in the gospel are truths; and as facts and truths are apprehended as things which have reality and intrinsic power, so we must apprehend the facts and doctrines in the gospel. Thus believing, we know that Jesus Christ is a real person, that heaven and hell are real places, that sin is really offensive to God, that the guilty will really be damned, and that the converted sinner will really be saved. This view of faith accords with the definition given us in Hebrews xi, 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and also with the representations in the Bible of the influence of faith. The man who is full of faith has insight into the truths of the Bible which the unbeliever never attains until he renounces the sin of unbelief. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The careful reader of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews will note what is said of the faith of Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, and will see that their believing was accompanied by spiritual vision, and amounted to assurance. He will see in 2d Cor. iv, 17, 18, that the wonderful power of "these light afflictions" in working for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," depends on the faith of the afflicted one, and this is thus stated: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The inhabitants of the world at the time of the deluge saw no danger, because they had no faith in the declarations of those who were sent to warn them; but Noah saw signs of danger, and knew the flood was coming, hence "he prepared an ark for the saving of his household." The people who crowded the streets and houses of Sodom had no apprehension of an approaching catastrophe, because they were unbelievers; but Lot saw what was approaching, and he was saved by his faith, for he fled with his family from the city, leaving his unbelieving sons-in-law to their fate. I think I can see in

the conversation between the rich man, in the torments of hell, and Abraham, in heaven, that the rich man believed not what Moses and the prophets wrote concerning eternal things, and that his five brothers, whom he had left in the world, were unbelievers; and hence he requests that the testimony of a dead man may be added to that of these inspired writers. The rich man believed not while he lived, but the conviction of his fatal error was produced by the realization of the horrid pangs of damnation. Lazarus believed, and his faith caused him to trust in God, and to use the means which are necessary to salvation; and this led to the attainment of holiness and heaven.* So it is now; some men are blinded by the god of this world, and do not believe in Jesus Christ, and these are led captive by Satan at his will; others have freed themselves from prejudice, have penitently, prayerfully, and believingly looked into the gospel; thus they have obtained help from the Holy Spirit, and have felt the power of the truth in changing them into the image of Him in whom they have trusted.

That hearing what is contained in the gospel may lead us to the knowledge which will produce salvation, has been demonstrated in thousands of cases. A hearer may give attention to a series of historical lectures on the life of Washington. The lecturer may convince the hearer that Washington lived, and exercised his mental and moral faculties so as to become a successful warrior, a consummate statesman, a model patriot. He may present a picture of this great man's achievements on the battle fields and in the council chambers of our country, and of his virtues in the private walks of domestic life, which, by its vividness, may be compared to the images seen in a looking-glass. The hearer may listen until his imagination becomes excited, and he beholds the image of the great man, and he may gaze on this image until his desire to be like Washington may become supreme; and if hope of attaining to this likeness shall be strong in his mind, he will have his own consent to make any sacrifice and use any means requisite for the attainment of so desirable an end. A man being convinced of his sinful and lost condition, may hear the preaching of the Word until he shall see the glorious character of our Lord Jesus Christ. He may learn that the whole life of Christ was spent in the labors which were necessary to complete the plan of

*Luke x, vi.

redemption. That "He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father." That all this work of redeeming and interceding is for the salvation of sinners. The hearer knows that he himself is a sinner, hears now that he has a Saviour, and that the Holy Spirit is at work to bring sinners to Christ. He admires the glory of the Lord; he desires to be made like Christ; he has his own consent to sacrifice all that the gospel condemns, and to use all the means that the gospel recommends. These desires are excited in him by the Holy Spirit, and they lead him to pray with faith and hope. He embraces Christ as his Redeemer, he trusts in Him as his Saviour, and commits himself to Him as one who is able to save him from all sin. Thus embracing, trusting, committing himself, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, he will believe with all his heart. This is his part of the work. In this way he "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling." One may admire the character of the great patriot mentioned in the first part of this paragraph, and may desire to be like him, and yet make no effort to attain this likeness, and have no hope of attaining it, because nature has not endowed him as she did Washington, and the times are not favorable to the performance of such achievements as he performed. It is a law in our constitution that we will never labor to obtain any object, unless we are persuaded that it is valuable and attainable. One who beholds with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, is encouraged to hope for likeness to the same image, because God has promised that he who by faith embraces Christ as his prophet, priest, and king, shall be changed into the same image by the same Spirit which animated Christ's human soul and inspired holy men to write the gospel. And all may perform the condition on which this promise depends. Let "the heart turn to the Lord, and the veil shall be taken away;"* the inquirer shall see the glory of the Lord, and shall be changed into the same image.

We now propose to show—

II. What God has to do for us in order that we may be saved. This is expressed in the text thus: "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The apostle in this expression asserts that the spirit will change

* 2 Cor. iii, 16.

the believer; he gives us the model to which he will be assimilated, and he teaches that this shall progress towards a perfect likeness.

First. A *change* shall take place. This is asserted in the language used by Paul, by a word which intimates the nature of the change. This word has been introduced into the English language without any change in its form when we use the noun *metamorphosis*, and with a slight alteration when we use the verb *metamorphosed*. "We are metamorphosed into the same image." The word suggests illustrations taken from natural history, by which we may see the thoroughness of the transformation. In the class of *insects* we have an order called *Lepidoptera*, in which there is a family called *Papilionidae*. From an egg is hatched an insect which in its growth develops a *larva* of very loathsome form and groveling appetites. We instinctively shrink from its touch. We despise it, because its sole employment is to devour food. We fear it, because we imagine a creature so loathsome and destructive must be armed with teeth and poison. We turn away from it with irrepressible disgust, because its aspect is hideous. We crush it with pleasure, because we judge that it is unworthy of life. After this filthy, hated, loathsome creature has attained its maturity, it seeks a place of concealment, ceases to take any food, and yields itself up to a power by which the *larva* is changed into the *chrysalis*, and from the chrysalid there comes an insect wholly unlike the caterpillar. In its habits we see cleanliness, in its body we see beauty, on its wings we see the gorgeous colors of the rainbow. It is pursued by playful children, handled by delicate maidens, gazed on with delight by tasteful men, and preserved with carefulness in the cabinets of naturalists. This is a *metamorphosis*. The caterpillar is metamorphosed into the butterfly. Without experience, who would believe that this beautiful insect, adorned with wings, furnished with a long spiral proboscis or tongue, and standing on six legs, came from a hated, hairy caterpillar, having jaws and teeth, and fourteen feet?

There stands before me a creature whose mind is earthly, whose nature is sensual, whose spirit is devilish. He lives to gratify his appetites and to indulge his propensities. In these he is groveling, and in his habits he is loathsome. He opens his mouth to blaspheme his Maker, to deride his Saviour, to defy his Judge, to slander his neighbor. He cultivates no virtue, he restrains himself from no vice. He boasts of his independence, he glories in his degradation, he

strives to be contented with his condition, and he charges God with the evil that is in him. To the eye of purity this creature is a mass of loathsome corruption. There is no faculty in him which has not been prostituted to the service of the devil, and corrupted by sin. He is a fallen being, a polluted creature, a lost sinner. He does not look into his own heart; he dares not look into eternity. He drives on, heedless of the admonitions of his friends, imagines himself as good as his neighbors, and judges the whole system of religion a falsehood. This wicked man has a soul in his body—an immortal soul. This makes him the subject of christian solicitude, and impels some one to mention his name in prayer, and to pursue him with the voice of love and entreaty. He is induced to go to the house of God. He opens his ears to hear the preacher. He looks into the mirror which the Holy Spirit has made. His own image is therein presented in all its offensive features and horrid deformity, and appears exceedingly vile by contrast with the image of Jesus Christ. The glory of the latter blinds him, but its loveliness stirs his insensible soul, and its look of affection astonishes him. Can it be possible that Christ can love so vile a being? Will he save one so deeply fallen, so perfectly depraved? Hearing produces thought; thought merges into reflection; reflection creates fear; fear urges the question, "What shall I do?" The way is open for instruction. The preacher brings out of his treasury things new and old. He shows him his sinfulness and guilt and danger, and his heart breaks; his spirit becomes contrite; he renounces his sins, he consecrates himself to God. The gospel glass is kept before him. He beholds the image of Christ hanging on the cross, buried in the sepulchre, arising from the tomb, ascending into heaven, interceding with God. He apprehends these events as facts. The doctrines are explained, the promises are read. He embraces these as realities and truths. By some power working in him, to which he submits, he is able to see that all the provision of the gospel is adapted to his wants, and by faith he appropriates it to himself and claims it as his own. In this act he commits himself to Jesus Christ, as perfectly as the sick man commits himself to the physician. In that instant he is changed—yes, changed into the image of Christ—metamorphosed by the power of God into a new man This is the work of God. It is the beginning of salvation in this life. No man can change himself. If he is changed at all, God must do it.

This change is spoken of in the Bible, and different terms are used to represent it. It is called "born again," or "born from above," in Christ's sermon to Nicodemus—hence, we get the term "new birth." And that no man may mistake about this matter, the evangelist tells us that all who receive Christ, "are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" This conveys to our minds the same idea as that expressed by James, in these words: "Of his own will *begat he us* with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures," with the addition of the instrument which God uses. The Holy Spirit uses the truth contained in the gospel in changing men from nature to grace. So, also, Paul admonishes us thus, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of your minds;" and "Put off the old man, which is corrupt, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is the work of regeneration, and is experienced by all who believe in Christ with hearts unto righteousness; for God hath "given us exceding great and precious promises, that by these we might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world." This change is called in our theology *conversion*, and we get the term from the Bible. The Psalmist says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting [the margin has it restoring] the soul." Our Lord said to his disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And James says, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." From these we learn that conversion *restores* men to the image of God; makes them *like little children* in humility, affection, and docility; brings them under the *operation of the truth*, relieves them from the guilt of a *multitude of sins*, and *saves their souls from death.* All who experience this "are in Christ Jesus," and "are new creatures, old things having passed away, and all things having become new."

The model character to which this change assimilates men, is that of our Lord—"We are changed into the *same image.*" We may search the records of history, and we find no one whose nature was so perfect, and whose example was so lovely as Christ; hence, there is

no one who can be followed with so much safety. During his life he was pursued by malignant men who commanded civil and ecclesiastical forces, and these were held under fretful restraint by their incapacity to find out anything which they could use against him. His private character was irreproachable, his labors were disinterested, his whole time was consumed in doing good. When he was arraigned and charged with blasphemy, the specification did not sustain the charge, though the high priest with hypocritical zeal gave judgment against him. When he was carried before Pilate, and charged with rebellion, the specification could not be proved. And when the multitude called for his crucifixion, the judge after much perplexity and thorough examination, said, "Take him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." No man has passed through more searching scrutiny, and yet his reputation for piety, zeal, purity, wisdom, and all the graces which ennoble man and perfect the christian, stands this day unquestioned. The truths which he taught are embraced by all who believe in him. These are planted in them by the Holy Spirit, and they become the principles by which they are controlled and sustained. The love which was in him "is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them," and this impels them to do his will. The grace which sustained him in all his labors and trials is given to them, and may be had in quantity equal to their wants. Converting grace puts the believer in this state of assimilation to Christ, that is to say, it *begins this assimilation.* There may be in the heart of the converted man much that is evil, but the truth is opposing, and the grace of God is eradicating this evil; and in case this grace is not frustrated by unbelief, and truth is not choked by the cares of this world, or the deceitfulness of riches, or the lust of other things, then the likeness shall be perfect enough to insure a title to the inheritance of heaven. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," is the admonition of Paul.

Secondly. This change shall go on towards perfection—"We are changed into the same image *from glory to glory.*" The work of conversion is always sudden, and it may be attended by such evidences as shall satisfy the subject of it that he has passed from the natural to the spiritual or gracious state. The conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, of Saul of Tarsus, of Cornelius of Cæsarea, of the jailor in Philippi, was sudden and powerful. No man is regenerated partially, born of God gradually. This work must

be done at once. The evidence of it however may not satisfy the mind of the young convert at first. He may pass through hours and days doubting and fearing, until the production of the fruits of the Spirit shall convince him that God has converted him. Right instruction concerning the effect of conversion, and careful self-examination, will enable any man to find out whether he is a converted man. Let this change be wrought by the Holy Spirit, and then let the "babe in Christ" be fed with what St. Paul calls "the sincere milk of the word," and there will be growth in the knowledge and grace of Christ. The believer will progress into a state in which he may be fed with what the same apostle calls "strong meat."* Let this strong meat be eaten and digested, and he who was a babe will pass rapidly through the state of childhood and youth into the maturity of christian character. He must walk by the same faith he exercised when the Holy Spirit changed him; he must continue in the use of the same means; "he must, with open face, behold the glory of the Lord" in the Gospel, as he did at first, and the work of grace will go on assimilating him to the image of Christ, from glory to glory.

This is set before us clearly by the apostle in these words: "And besides this, (that is being made partakers of the divine nature) giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren [the margin has it *idle*, which is the right word] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: . . . for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."† Herein we see the faith of the converted man urging him to the exercise of courage, the use of study, the practice of obedience, and God carries on his gracious work in the production of the fruit which he values highly, and promises to own and approve in eternity.

At the same time the believer is applying himself to the use of the means of grace, the Holy Spirit is imparting the "wisdom which cometh down from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and

* Heb. v, 12. † 2 Peter, ii, 5-11.

without hypocrisy."* He is shedding abroad in his heart the love of God; He is fixing in his soul the kingdom of God, which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and He is so mingling the influences of His grace and providence as to cause tribulations to produce patience, and patience to produce experience, and experience to produce hope of eternal life. "And every man who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he (i. e. Christ) is pure." In all this work, man and God are co-workers. The former is performing the conditions and using the means, and the latter is applying his truth, is increasing the measure of his grace, and augmenting the power of his love. Here we have faith working, love laboring, and hope patiently enduring the whole of God's will.† And the fruit which results therefrom consists of the virtues which ennoble human character, the graces of true religion, the qualities which Jesus Christ cultivated, and the purity or holiness which is necessary for residence in heaven.

In conclusion we state—

1. We are taught by moral philosophy that the moral quality of an action resides in the motive or the intention; and we are taught by observation that there is connection between principles and conduct. Hence there is need for knowledge of truth, faith in truth, and realization of the power of truth. No man cultivates right motives and has sound moral principles unless he receives into his mind and believes with his heart what God has revealed concerning his Son. This will produce sound experience, and Christian experience consists in the love of God in the heart; and he who has this in full measure is changed into the image of Christ. All who desire to obey God must have their hearts renewed by grace; and this will always accompany genuine faith. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

2. Capacity to see and understand the truth depends on the state of our minds and hearts. If the former be full of prejudice, and the latter be estranged from God, there will result darkness, and ignorance, and sin. "When the heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away," is the declaration of Paul. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light," is the promise of Christ.

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* James iii, 17. † 1 Thess. i, 3.

3. The readers of this discourse will desire to see cases of men who have been changed into the image of Christ, and have continued to make progress from glory to glory. Cases are numerous wherever the gospel is preached and received, yet many men may not see them. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the people who heard his sermons and saw his miracles did not know what a model of benevolence, piety, wisdom, and truthfulness, they had in their midst. When Paul was preaching Christ to his cotemporaries, his hearers did not know the purity of his heart, the burning zeal of the apostle, and the joy of the Christian. When Wesley, Fletcher, and Whitfield, were at work in England, the people abused them, and the clergy persecuted them. Man sees the outward form, God sees the heart. Man judges of motives by actions; God looks first at the motives, and then judges the action. Every sinner who gives his heart to God is changed into the image of Christ; and every one who keeps the precious grace in his heart, and does not frustrate it, is advancing towards perfection. Cases of this kind are around us, though we may not see them. Reader, strive to be like your Lord. When you have the inclination to judge your neighbor, repress it by looking into your own heart.

4. Preparation for heaven must be begun and finished in this world. The body presents no insuperable obstacle to the holiness of the soul. The hour of death has no more power to aid the sinner in seeking the grace of salvation than may be secured and experienced by any penitent in the enjoyment of health and life. The image of Christ may be stamped on our souls in this life; and it must be done in this life, or exclusion from heaven and imprisonment in hell will be the result. When we pass through death and enter eternity, the angel of God will say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."*

* Rev. xxii, 11.

GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.

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"Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—Isaiah xl, 3, 4, 5.

In the impressive language of the great historian of the reformation, "Jesus Christ is the purpose of God in history." Whereas, unfortunately for the world, the religion of the Messiah has been too often degradingly regarded as a mere appendage to the embodiment of divine truth—a convenient supplement to a reigning system—designed perhaps to embellish or explain it, or at best to furnish mankind, in the character of its great founder, with a lively impersonation of inimitable virtue.

Our views, however, of this grand system of world-reforming and world-saving power, derived from the inspired volume, authorize and *require* us to announce its claims as coeval with the guilt of Paradise, and constituting a part and parcel of the stupendous economy of the moral and intellectual universe; and like the brilliant rings of Saturn, which adorn his evening skies, engirdling our sin-doomed world, and spanning the moral heavens with a zone of living light, which reveals at once the dignity and the destiny of our race, and solves the otherwise inexplicable problem of human existence. In short, God in Christ Jesus, "reconciling the world unto himself," is the *great truth* which illumines Revelation's page from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse. Such a religion, then, rises into augustness and grandeur in human contemplation, as it challenges the attention and demands the confidence of mankind. But to accomplish its sublime designs it must come with the badges of divinity upon its brow, and the overpowering displays of Omnipotence in its train. Proposing to redeem the world from the curse of ages, and to herald the way to a happy eternity, it must antecedently prepare the human mind for

the gradual development of its wonderful truths, and then propitiously begin the extension of its divine sway, which is only to be consummated when the ransomed nations, from the Arctic circles to the line, shall exult in the universality of its millennial reign.

The religion we reverence, then, is not the ephemeral offspring of finite intelligence, much less the surviving spawn of an exploded philosophy. As the sun of heaven was the physical center upon which hung the vast revolutions of all the planetary worlds that circle around him—no less during the first *three* demiurgic days of the Mosaic cosmogony than after he had assumed, upon the *fourth*, his more brilliant phase and became the *measurer* of our days and the light-giver to the universe—so the "Sun of Righteousness," the great center of the *moral* heavens, was no less essentially and efficiently present when "the morning stars sang together, and all the suns of God shouted for joy," than after four thousand years had rolled away, when, robed in the full-orbed light of his glory, he rose upon the world from the crimson horizon of Calvary. Yea, the "Rock of Ages" was no less the stable foundation of christian faith when the authorities of the synagogue, surrounded by the dim outlines of a vague theology, proclaimed "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," than when, under the noon-day effulgence of the cross, those God-like doctrines were so benevolently inculcated—"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

Thus we are to regard christianity as an integrant portion of the moral organization of the world, and inseparable from its history and destiny; blending its issues with the physical condition and final catastrophe of our planet; and yet for the wisest of purposes, and in accordance with an eternal law of heaven, the beauty and symmetry and majesty of its mighty proportions have been reserved for the gradual evolution of succesive centuries.

Nor are all its exalted truths yet illustrated, nor its noblest triumphs yet achieved. Its grand consummation is yet to be effected amid the splendors of the resurrection morning and the glories of the descending throne; when earth's returning millions, over-spanned by "new heavens," and standing upon "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," clad in the courtly costume of a higher dominion shall set out afresh upon the diuturnally ascending scale of progress

ive intellect for a still more exalted goal, nearer, and still nearer the transcendent light of the throne!

Progress towards perfection marks the order of the divine economy in every department of its reign. An approximation to higher from lower conditions characterizes the movements of the physical, mental, and moral universe. Nature to her profoundest depths felt and obeyed this impulse from her God long before the inspired dictum, "Let us go on to perfection," fell upon the moral world from the lips of the gifted Apostle of the Gentiles.

The gray dawn and the rosy tints of twilight must gently train the delicate retina to meet the bolder blaze of the rising sun and the meridian brightness of the perfect day. The swelling bud and the opening flower must be evoked from the torpid sleep of winter; the genial breath of spring start once more the bounding pulse of forest life; and then, and not till then, will earth's green glories and her golden harvests vindicate the perfection of the vegetable kingdom. Nay, this law of physical progression is traceable in its action from the elementary atom up to the highest combinations in the inorganic world—from the microscopic cellule which nurses the germ of vegetable and animal life, up to the gorgeous organization of planets and suns in the profound depths of space. Geology, from her venerable records graven with the stylus of passing centuries upon her eternal tablets of rock, convincingly establishes its prevalence and power, and by a striking and unpremeditated harmony of testimony, from the deep subterranean tombs of the Fauna and Flora of a pre-Adamic world, substantially confirms the ascending order of creation, as in the cosmical details of the Mosaic history. There was a time, according to the annunciations of *both*, when the elements of our planet constituted but a diffuse, nebulous, chaotic mass, "without form and void," and when "darkness was upon the face of the deep:" a time when, in the magnificent oriental phrase of inspiration, it had but just "issued out of the womb," and when "the cloud was made the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it."* This, however, was but its elementary condition. "Let there be light, and there was light," was the next step in the order of sequence. Then followed, as successive links in the continuous chain, the condensation of the nebulous mass into fluids and solids, the re-

* Job xxxviii, 8, 9.

treat of oceans and seas into their cavernous beds, and the upheaval of islands, continents, and mountain ranges above the retiring floods. Passing by the Algæ of the seas, next come the first manifestations of terrestrial vegetation, beginning in the upper Silurian system, and advancing in the geologic scale, through the old red sandstone, the Permian and Triassic systems, up to the Tertiary. From the flowerless, leafless, and stemless Thallogens, at the base of the scale, to the Monocotyledons, Polycotyledons, and lastly the Dicotyledons of our orchards and forests—a wonderful palæontological series, almost exactly corresponding with the modern botanical arrangement of the distinguished Lindley, and still more strangely harmonizing with the simple but clear order of creation reported by Moses, and divided by that sacred cosmologist into "*grass*, the *herb* yielding seed, and the *fruit tree*, yielding fruit after his kind, whose *seed is in itself*," as the apple, peach, plum, pear, &c.

Then in the upward grade of organic life, revealed in this geologic series, and in still more remarkable parallelism with the classification of Cuvier, the greatest zoölogist of modern times, appear the inhabitants of the *animal* kingdom, from the star-like type of the sea-urchins in the Silurian zone, through the regularly expanding line of fishes, reptiles, birds, and mammals, in the various superincumbent strata, up to the grand consummation of organic being upon earth, in the Tertiary formation, the incomparable microcosm of MAN himself, the last crowning work of this sublunary creation, as announced by the God of the Bible, and confirmed by the imperishable records of the rocky world. So that we may appropriately exclaim with Dryden:

> "From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began:
> From harmony to harmony,
> Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
> The *diapason* closing full in man."

But *mind* too, must reach its climax by progressive development. Yon pale and puling infant, which now lies in unconscious dependence upon the bosom of its mother, and dozes its monotonous days away, must patiently await, through the long lapse of half a century, the tedious metamorphosing toil of six hundred millions of pulses, in expanding its fragile form, and unfolding its dormant powers; and *then* the world shall gaze with astonishment and awe upon the won-

derful Corsican, whose mighty intellect, like the heavings of an ocean in a storm, sports with the noblest fabrics of other minds, and proudly rolls the tide of its triumphs over a trembling continent: or may dwell with admiration and delight upon that peerless model of a man, who, unfurling the stainless flag of freedom over the shouting millions of the American people, and sweeping the circle of their dominion over half a hemisphere—wins from their filial hearts the endearing appellation of "The Father of his Country."

Surely, then, the interests of the moral world, which stir man's noblest ambition, inspire his loftiest hopes, and embrace within their awful range the dooms of eternity, cannot be governed by a *less* wise, comprehensive, and patient policy. No, verily, for the stupendous plan which was elaborated in heaven for the enlargement, elevation, and SALVATION of human nature, contemplated that nature in its earliest and worst phases, and has continued, through successive centuries, to follow and control the destinies of mankind, and to uncover its splendors and widen the horizon of its light, as their mental and moral disfranchisement seemed to require. Even now, its grand movements are seen but "in transitu." We have only beheld "the beginning of the end." The transcendent triumphs of christianity are yet in the distance, when the resources of the social, commercial, scientific, and religious worlds—multiplied a hundred fold—shall pour in their spontaneous contributions, to swell the tide of the Divine glory, and complete the bliss of the nations.

She occupies, as we have seen, an integral, luminous, and commanding position in the great prolific scheme of the existing universe, and is inseparably associated with its history and destiny. No lapse of ages subdues her energies; no past successes limit her conquests, and no geographical boundaries circumscribe her dominions. The circumference of the globe alone is the sphere of her extension, and the ultimate purification of the nations the laudable object of her toils. And in anticipation of these world-wide moral victories, the herald-notes of the coming jubilee are already sounded from the thousand pulpits of the land; and Faith, smiling as she looks from her exalted stand-point, over the christian schools, and colleges, and churches, and mission fields of the age, which throng upon her view, significantly points to the skies, and utters the inspiring language of the text: "Prepare ye the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our GOD."

Maintaining the truth, then, under the beautiful imagery adopted by Isaiah, we are authorized to consider—

1st. The long-standing purpose of Heaven, that a "high-way" should be opened up through the *moral* world for the entrance and triumphant progress of its reigning King.

2d. To mark the character of the preparation required for this extended visit of the royal guest through His earthly dominion.

3d. To contemplate the promised results of His reign.

To consider the *first* proposition, then: Man has lost his original position in the scale of creation. He was once a temple filled with God,—the light of Divine glory streaming through all its aisles and arches, and revealing the virgin beauty of its lovely interior. But, alas! a wasting hurricane has swept over the spot, and now its architectural magnificence, like the crumbling columns of Palmyra, lies in fragmentary ruins, while Contemplation broods in melancholy reverie over the moral desolation of the scene. It is good that man should hold communication with the past, and learn to check the pride and arrogance of an easily inflated mind, by humiliating reminiscences of its ancestral fall, and the consequent conviction of its entailed helplessness and present guilt.

The first representative of our race, then, was the fit companion of angels and the favorite of the skies. Inhaling the pure atmosphere of his innocent home, he stood in the dignity of his noble manhood, with the earth around him blooming in the freshness of its green beauty—the heavens above him radiant with the Creator's smile—no ominous cloud to darken the back-ground of his young history, and a wide vision of coming bliss stretching out in long perspective before him. He stood, too, in the undimmed lustre of priceless *purity* —the richest crown jewel in the kingdom of God. Hell's vindictive monarch, big with hate to Him who booned it, and guided to his task by a deadly strategy, approached, and praised, and stirred ambition's fires, and then bartered for the gem. *Knowledge*, (O, Heaven!) knowledge—when *authorized* and *hallowed*, the patrimony of angels; but when *forbidden* and *profound* the curse of archangels ruined,—*knowledge* was lyingly tendered as the tempting equivalent of its worth! The guile was deep and damning. The fiendish swindler triumphed, and a beggared, blasted, and expatriated race lived to date their crime and their curse from Paradise. But mercy still lingered over the doom of the rebel, and taxed the resources of Almighty

Goodness to avert his final fate, despoil the infernal monster of his prey, and let immortality, once more restored to her primeval honors, claim her perennial bliss in the smile of Heaven.

But no unseemly haste was necessary to perfect the execution of the Divine plans. "One day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." As one hundred and twenty *years* must slowly wear away before Noah's floating palace was ready for the floods; so one hundred and twenty *generations* must find their way to the tomb, before its great *antitype*—the place of refuge for the dying nations—is ready for their full reception. A straggling beam of light, it is true, had fallen upon the devious path of the exiles from Paradise, as a voice from Heaven whispered in mysterious purport, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

But still darkness brooded over their doom. Time rolled heavily on. Their posterity increased, and the coming of some great event, which was deeply to affect its destiny, hung portentously upon the heart of the world. Patriarchs lived, and longed, and *died*, with a limited horizon and a star-lit path. Next, in the order of Heaven, followed a long line of consecrated men, burning with inspiration's fires, kindled at the upper temple. Ascending, in deliberate succession, the mount of prophesy, they flung the light of hope far down the vista of future ages. The princely son of Amoz, the loftiest of their rank, seemed laden with the excess of a boundless revelation, and rolled from his sounding harp the coming glories of the "golden age," and the royal reign of Heaven. And to arouse into activity the moral languor of a forgetful world, his monitory tones have for more than twenty-five hundred years rung upon its ear from the heights of prophecy, in the exhilarating accents of the text,—"Prepare ye the way of the LORD: make straight in the desert a high-way for our GOD," &c. Malachi caught the glowing theme, and following in the train, sang, swan-like, his last and sweetest notes: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

But the last sounds of prophetic minstrelsy died away in the distance; the unstrung harp was laid upon the altar, and silence reigned in the synagogue for *four hundred years*. It seemed the breathless stillness of a crowded court, where every heart palpitates, and where every eye is strained to catch the presence of coming royalty, whose approaching footsteps are heard upon the threshold. At length the

destined hour arrives, and the "King of Glory comes." But alas! how widely different from human expectation is the manner of his advent! How mortifying to the arrogance of rabbinical learning! How humiliating to the pride and vanity of the world!

It is midnight. Jerusalem's thousands are wrapped in slumber. The little village of Bethlehem, nestling in its quiet seclusion like some land-locked bay away from the storms of the deep, has nursed its busy population to rest. All is still. One sound only occasionally disturbs the drowsy air. It must be—*it is—the wail of an infant* from a neighboring manger. It clings to the bosom of its outcast mother, as her circling arms, its only cradle, rock it to its rest. Merciful Heaven! What means this supernatural scene? A queenly star, unseen before, stands sentinel over the spot. An angelic legion are out upon the wing, and the skies resound with a new anthem from heaven: "Glory to GOD in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is CHRIST the LORD."

The mystery is now solved. I understand its lofty import. *The infant Messiah breathes!* The incipient God incarnate enters upon his mission of mercy to the world; and that wail—that *plaintive and thrilling wail*, was the seal of the fleshly tie that binds him to our suffering nature. The great event is proclaimed. Wonders in earth and heaven attend his bright career, encircle his divinity upon the Cross, and herald him home from the conquered tomb to the welcoming skies. The promised *redemption* has come. The pulse of immortality now beats fully and freely under the winding-sheet, and a *dead world*, Lazarus-like, leaps from its grave, to enjoy the light of an everlasting day. But earth is not yet ready for her higher destiny of innocence and purity, and for ages to come, the mandatory message of Isaiah, reiterated by the harbinger of Christ: "Prepare ye the way of the LORD," &c., must still be thundered upon the ear of the nations from the high places of Zion.

We are to consider, *secondly*—

"The character of the preparation required for this extended visit of the royal guest through his earthly dominions."

Christianity contemplates a progressive and thorough reformation of the world. Her heavenly efficiency, and her benevolent and sublime purpose, will compromise for no less noble results. The loathsomeness of vice must be transformed into the loveliness of virtue, or

fly before her reign and meet the bolt that dooms it. Earth must be purified from her blood, and robed in her beauty, to shout the welcome advent of the "latter day glory." But for the consummation of this high destiny, no single instrumentality from earth or heaven has been exclusively consecrated. The universe of means is under her control, and a thousand auxiliaries may be legitimately taxed for the accomplishment of the grand event. The mammoth obstacles which have heretofore obstructed her career of glory must be broken down by powerful appliances, commensurate with the majesty of her designs. When the claims of Divinity are to be vindicated, Omnipotence must signalize itself by an outlay of God-like power, independently of human aid, and above and beyond all human resources. Obsequious nature must suspend her laws in allegiance to her Lord, and earth and air, and sea, and sky, pour their voiceless tribute at his feet. At his word the green fig tree must wither to its roots, as if smitten with the volcano's breath. The wild hurricane, lashed on by the lightning's thong to make battle with the angry seas, must sink apoplectic upon its mission of wrath, while the lulled waves softly ripple the lullaby of peace to rescued and rejoicing nature; and even the unaccustomed grave disgorge at his fiat its sheeted dead, in triumphant proof of a coming resurrection.

But when miracles have proclaimed and sustained the origin of our religion, and her effective machinery is manifestly in motion, under a Divine momentum, every subordinate agency within the range of her action may be fitly employed in the spread and enforcement of her soul-saving truths, as each succeeding age affords its own peculiar supply. Hence, in the outset of the apostolic mission, a diversity of talents characterized the leading disciples, each being suited to his appropriate sphere. There was the mild, meek, and faithful JOHN, the very impersonation of gentleness and love, and emotionally constituted to woo, and to win. With the warm gush of christian sympathy in his heart, and the persuasive eloquence of paternal affection upon his tongue, how touchingly he pleads: "*Little children, love one another.*" There, too, was the bold, frank, and fearless PETER, to confound the circumcision, and charge home the murder of his immortal master upon the cowering Jews, whose hands yet reeked with the blood of the crucifixion. Amid this galaxy of primeval worth, stood the kind, cultivated, and eloquent Apollos, to still the noise of the heaving multitudes by the sweetness of his tones, and

charm the subdued heart by the pathos of his sanctified rhetoric. And last, but not least, the learned, magnanimous, and powerful disciple of Gamaliel—rich in historical, mythological, and rabbinical lore; whose steel-like logic fell with the keenness of a Damascus blade upon the cloven helmets and sinking forms of the stupid philosphy and arrogant religionism of the day.

In accordance with the order of Divine Providence, therefore, it has been reserved for learning, science, and the arts, in the latter ages of the church, to furnish new instrumentalities for the diffusion and defence of moral truth.

The Butlers and Paleys; the Watsons and Clarks; the Chalmerses and Keiths, who have stood upon the walls and labored for the glory of Jerusalem, have "wrought in the work" with *one* hand, while the *other* has "held a weapon" whose trenchant blade told fearfully upon the intruding ranks of infidelity. Indeed some of the most signal and startling repulses with which skepticism has met, in modern years, have been from the strongholds of learning—even unconsecrated by piety. It was the profound knowledge of La Place, and the cultivated discernment of De Lambre, each in search of solely *scientific* truth, and *both* the avowed friends and patrons of infidelity, that exploded the ingenious and alarming treatise of M. Bailey, upon the celebrated Hindoo Tables, which in the close of the last century, under the powerful prestige of Professor Playfair's name, threatened to subvert the whole Mosaic cosmogony. And, later still, it was the deep archeological lore of the younger Champolion of France, in 1801, which scattered to the winds the gossamer texture of the famous Zodiacal system of infidelity, by solving the mysterious hieroglyphics found upon the Egyptian planispheres, in the temples of Esne and Dendera.

But the Sciences too, we have said, have entered the field in defence of Revelation.

Astronomy, the noblest of the sisterhood, came first to do homage to the babe of Bethlehem. A strange and lonely *star*—the virgin creation of his natal hour, or summoned, it may be, from some far-off home in immensity, as if at once the commissioned herald and lustrous symbol of his future reign—graced the brow of our firmament, and culminated over the manger cradle, where the Prince of Peace reposed. Astronomy, too, when his benevolent mission was closed, stood last at his cross, and contributed her solemnly-sublime testi-

monies to the farewell agonies of her incarnate God. The sun of heaven quenched his beams in the blood of the crucifixion, and turned noon into midnight, over an astonished world—leaving outraged conscience, for three dark, dismal hours, to lash his murderers with the memory of their guilt!

Chemistry instantaneously suspended her universal law of gravitation, that the Deity incarnate might walk upon the seas; and again, at his high behest, sent back her revivifying oxygen into the collapsed lungs of Jairus' daughter.

While *Geology* (the youngest of the group, and scarcely yet known to the scientific world) confessed the presence of his power by the rupture of her rocky strata under the cries of Calvary; and in the apostolic age proclaimed her unbroken allegiance to his authority, by the earthquake throes which shook Philippi to its foundation, when imprisoned piety prayed.

But why need we supply further illustration? It is enough briefly to say, that under the liberal and humanizing spirit of the age, Science, which has long stooped in degrading vassalage to the arrogant exactions of her infidel task-masters, and been tortured into the support of atheistical dogmas and a hopeless materialism, is now rejoicing in the freedom of a boundless research; and from her tour of exploration through the natural universe, returns ever and anon laden with the triumphs of her toils, to pour them in adoring gratitude at the foot of the cross. Nor will her generous labors ever cease, until the entire physical universe, with its profound laws and wonderful phenomena, shall be found to harmonize with the high moral truths and grand revelations made in the Christian Scriptures.

The prophetic prenunciation contained in the language of Isaiah, viz: "Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low, the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain," seems even now to be in the process of an almost *literal* fulfilment, under the formative and directive forces of Science and the Arts, as the rising valleys are shouldering the tonnage of the seas, and cloven mountains are disemboweled for the passage of the flying locomotive and its thundering train, bearing far away into the heart of continents the light of intelligence and the faith of Christendom; while *mind*, mounted upon its *straight* iron pathway, and sped onward by the lightning's breath, outstrips the eagle upon the wing of the storm, and leaves the booming tempest itself in the rear; or anon,

defying the world-wide commotion of the angry main, which strains a hundred strong crafts to their laboring keels, shoots with the speed of light along its wiry thoroughfare, through the bowels of the seas, far below the briny bed where the sea-serpent sleeps, and rises upon a distant continent on its mission of light, interlocking whole nations in the bonds of brotherhood; and under the powerful plea of interest and prosperity, subduing the belligerent spirit of mankind, and opening the way for the reign of millennial peace, when "the sword shall be turned into the plowshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook."

But the language of the prophet, in the verse just referred to, is perhaps to be regarded mainly figurative, and warranting an ulterior and higher application than the mere literal import of its terms would indicate. The various obstacles to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and their complete removal, in the progress of years, by the prevalent and powerful religion of the cross, seem here to be triumphantly contemplated. The spirit of Christianity *exalts* the *lowly* and *humbles* the *proud;* strikes a common *level* from earth to heaven; and against the philosophy of the past and the selfishness of the present, bears prince and peasant, priest and people, along the same graded thoroughfare, to the kingdom of God.

The covert intrigues and *tortuous windings* of corrupt human policy, as well as the "*crooked*" outline of ungodly creeds, are all to be abandoned for the "*straight*" path of duty and the *plainness* of sanctifying truth. And, lastly, the great *barriers* to the spread of Christianity shall be *broken down;* the power of her enemies neutralized and destroyed; the *roughness* of human nature polished and refined by its spirit; and the trials and misfortunes of life overcome and subordinated by its gracious internal reign.

The "signs of the times" are ominous of the approaching advent of a halcyon age, whose rosy twilight already tinges the moral horizon, and strongly forecasts the coming accomplishment of these prophetic dicta. Among the leading indications of a brighter future we cannot overlook the *educational enterprises* which, under the sanction of Christianity, are spreading far and wide through both continents. Our own favored land is sharing largely in the blessings of knowledge and truth, which flow in widening streams from the perennial fountains. *Ignorance* and *Idolatry* are twin sisters, under whose dual sovereignty the world's millions have long bowed, blighted and cursed, but whose waning kingdom and obsolete power are being rapidly suc-

ceeded by *Intelligence* and *Piety*—a noble union—crowned from the skies, and chartered with unlimited dominion, for the elevation and happiness of the whole human race.

At no remote day in the history of the past, had the envenomed shafts of Hume and Voltaire been true to their aim, Christianity might have received her death-blow, and not a college nor academy in the land have felt the shock of her dissolution. But how happily different the aspect which our own great country now presents! The BIBLE has been enthroned in the eyes of the nation. Its lofty morals have become the standard and touchstone of public and private virtue, while its sacred counsels daily resound through the halls and chapels of our seminaries of learning—hallowing the labors of professional instruction, and purifying the very well-springs of human knowledge. The ample provisions now made under its holy sanctions for the higher cultivation and refinement of *woman*, constitute a distinctive feature in our modern educational plans, and characterize the present as an interesting era in the history of our country. The high schools and colleges of the day, already in successful operation, are destined to give a literary maternity to hundreds of our lovely daughters. And although it is neither expected nor desired that they shall all turn poets, or painters, or musicians, or authors, and enter upon a vexatious career for fame, yet, under the chastening and ameliorating influence of these ministers of piety and learning, they are but the better prepared to become amiable sisters, enlightened and affectionate wives, and cultivated mothers—throwing the charms of taste and intelligence around the public heart, as well as the domestic circle—restraining vice, promoting virtue, and training up a hopeful progeny, around whose parental knees the young Washingtons, and Welbys and Websters, of a coming age, shall gather the elements of their future greatness. And yet, aroused and sprung by these educational appliances, why should not female genius plume her wing for a bolder flight? Who shall say that in some future day our Wesleys and Sigourneys may not be multiplied and improved, and that the emerald mountains and orange groves, the flowing rivers and golden sunsets of our native land, as well as the high themes of Revelation and the charms of virtue, may not be woven into still more persuasory and enrapturing verse by many of our gifted daughters, who shall stand as "corner stones" in the fabric of society, "polished after the similitude of a palace?" That other

Hannah Mores, arising from the common ranks of life, and supplied from the depositories of knowledge—rich in thought, pure in morals, and vigorous in style—may not issue from their prolific pens whole volumes of pertinent truth to warn the wealthy and gladden the poor? Or that other Miss Somervilles, expanding into fuller intellectual proportions under an American sky, may not measure the flight of newly-discovered worlds, or solve the apparent difficulties of retrograde cometary motion; and thus unitedly aid in elevating and refining human nature, to prepare it for its more exalted sphere.

Another characteristic of the times, which indicates the approaching consummation of long-standing prophecy, is *the strong tendency of the enlightened public mind to ascend to first principles*—to discover and to control elementary forces—leaving in the rear the *rude*, the *palpable*, and the *material*, and advancing to the region of the *refined*, the *impalpable*, and the *immaterial*. An emancipation from the blind dominion of Nature, and from the rigid exactions of her autocratic laws, has already been largely effected, after the patient progress of nearly sixty centuries. Her embarrassing resistance has been over-mastered by signal disclosures from her own arcana, and her exhaustless resources made tributary to the highest phase of advancing civilization.

Progressive development, we say, has marked the general history of the world; and although heretofore temporarily arrested or obstructed by impassable geographical boundaries, or paralyzing religious creeds, is certainly destined by the elastic and aggressive spirit of the age, and the liberalizing and diffusive character of our holy religion, yet to penetrate and arouse the heart of the most stolid and stationary nations, and send its reformatory impulse over the plains of northern Europe, the inhospitable steppes of Asia, and even through the sparsely-populated jungles of Hisdostan.

In the earlier ages of mankind, and among savage tribes, muscular effort was the sole dependence for personal supplies. Observation and reflection, however, soon suggested the use of the horse, the ox, and the ass, in substitution for human labor. Next were called into requisition the *mechanical forces* of the inorganic world; and the rolling *river* and plunging *cataract* were made subservient to the authority of advancing mind. The aid of a still more mobile fluid was then commanded, and the obedient *winds* turned machinery and filled the sails of commerce. But after the lapse of ages, clearer perceptions

and a wider horizon led to the discovery of a yet more elastic and powerful agent; and in the happy adaptation of *steam* to the play of machinery and the laws of locomotion, our American Fulton has inaugurated a new era in the history of civilization, and revolutionized the entire commercial world.

This brings us to the present century, when the whole heaven of intellect begins to glow with unaccustomed light, and has already disclosed to the wondering nations the secret store-houses of a still more ethereal and boundless power, whose fiery flights, dynamic feats, and limitless reign, vindicate our postulate — establish the pre-eminence of intangible and imponderable forces over the grosser forms of matter, and herald the advent of a brighter age. And yet the mysterious profounds of *electricity* are unsounded, and her utmost capabilities untaxed. Her incipient achievements, it is true, belong to the *present*, but her unrevealed glories are, perhaps, providentially reserved for the sublimer intellectuality of a *future* age.

So too, by beautiful parallelism, in the *moral* world. When the catastrophe of Paradise had grown dim upon the memory of a degenerate and polluted race, and the tradition of the deed had faded into twilight, their conceptions of a Deity became vague and degrading, the sensuous nature ruled in the ascendant, and wealth paid ample tribute at the imposing shrines of idolatry. Hence the artistic splendor of polytheistic Athens, with her thirty thousand gods, and the architectural magnificence of pagan Rome, with her one hundred and twenty gorgeous temples, even at the period when the learning and philosophy of the ancient world had reached its zenith. The soul was still in fetters, and the reigning God unknown. All religion was reduced to the visible, the tangible, and the audible, while sordidness and selfishness, sensuality and pollution, were consecrated at the altars and incorporated with the showy but scandalous mysteries of the ritual

Nay, such was the slowness of the human mind to perceive spiritual truth, that even within the pale of Revelation the sublime symbolic ceremonies of the Temple service were addressed by the Divine condescension to the exterior senses. But generations passed away, intelligence ripened, and the insignia of old dispensations gave place to the simplicity and spirituality of the Messiah's opening reign. And yet, in after centuries, many of the cumbrous forms and pompous rites of pagan superstition, were found clinging around the altars

of *christian* worship, when *another* grand phase of human progression burst upon the world from the sound and sanctified intellect of the immortal monk of Erfurt. Since the days of the Reformation, emancipated mind has been advancing to a higher level, and sweeping a broader horizon.

As in the physical, so in the psychological world, the most stupendous results follow from the play of invisible and intangible elements. This is emphatically the age of ethereal and impalpable forces, and christianity is but harmonizing in her grand, world-wide movements, with the significant and subordinate powers of nature, when her simple, elemental FAITH—the radical grace of the lovely train—is spreading its electric impulses far and wide, and stirring the masses of the moral world, over the length and breadth of a continent.

Such is the vast *revival influence* which has signalized this year of physical, mental, and moral wonders,—left its hallowing impress upon the public heart, and imposed its salutary restraints upon public morals throughout the States of this Union.

Christian faith, because invisible and incomprehensible in its modes of action, and incapable of demonstration by the microscope, the scalpel, or the crucible, has long been the subject of libertine taunt and skeptical inuendo, and has often provoked the fires of pagan persecution, and even the tortures of inquisitorial vengeance. But the very violence and oppression of the past have but served to unlimber her celestial artillery and unmask her strongest batteries.

Nature's ethereal forces—the most powerful which she wields—manifest their boldest phenomena when temporarily restrained and held in abeyance. How quiet and harmless the escape of steam from the matron's tea-kettle. But generate and confine it in iron cylinders, and huge masses of ponderous machinery start into motion, and impetuous keels scour the pathless deep, between distant kingdoms! How silent and invisible the ascent of liberated gases in the open air. But when evolved by the heat of the earth's central fires, and pent up by its superincumbent strata, whole continents rock under its elastic recoil, volcanoes heave, and mountains spring from the bottom of the seas.

The *electric fluid* too, whose ubiquity, dominion, and brilliant phenomena seem but to fore-type the universality and brightness of the reign of *faith*,—is noiseless and unseen, until, when insulated and confined upon the floating storm-cloud, it collects its latent energies,

and leaps with blinding blaze and startling crash, through the rent and yielding air, splintering masts and firing forests in its resistless course.

Such is the order of Heaven in the exhibitions of its *spiritual* power. Would you prove the inherent might and operative energies of the faith of Revelation, surround her by mountain ranges upon the right and left, intercept her onward passage by the Red sea, and press her in the rear by the countless chariots and horsemen of the Egyptian king, and then, at the signal from the Mosaic trident, the cloven waves shall stand like walls of adamant, as she leads the exultant hosts of Israel through the yawning chasm, and the returning floods submerge the enemies of God. Or, again; let barbarian thousands assail her armed legions, when the honor of Heaven is involved, and, obedient to her powerful impulses, the sun shall stand still over the beleaguered heights of Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon, until the arrogant heathen are swept from the earth, and the sovereignty of Jehovah sublimely vindicated. Then, let no faithless fears overshadow the vision of her pledged and princely future conquests. Her fair escutcheon, emblazoned by the deeds of apostolic days, and rich with the graven memories of martyrdom, shall never be tarnished by the records of an ignominious retreat in the campaign against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." Her spirit leads the great aggressive movements of Zion in the present age, and, less and less trammeled by the sensual clogs and unmeaning ceremonies which once so seriously impeded her progress, she goes "forth, conquering and to conquer," promising a bright and blissful future to the sons of men. And even *now*, the hybernating and masked infidelities of the day are shocked and paralyzed by the breadth of her empire and the silent successes of her arms. But our limits forbid us at present to trace these interesting parallelisms farther, and we desist.

Thirdly and lastly, then.

We propose briefly "to contemplate the promised results of His reign." In the lofty language of the text, "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.'

Christianity has no secrets which shall not be revealed. It is true, her comprehensive economy is too vast to be entirely compassed by

an earthly nature, and she must await the disfranchisement and enlargement of the immortal mind, amid the sinless scenes of Heaven, to unroll the wide wonders of her plan. There alone shall be sounded the fathomless deeps of the Divine mercy, in its incomprehensible affiliation with humble manhood, and its conquering struggle amid the death groans of the crucifixion. There, too, and there alone, shall the "glory of the LORD" be displayed, in unfolding to the enraptured eyes of his saints, the wisdom and the benevolence of that mysterious Providence which guided them to their rest. Yet even before her terrestrial mission is closed, when the broad charities of her heart shall have poured themselves out upon the whole earth, and the repentant and redeemed nations shall have tasted "the powers of the world to come,"—even then "the glory of the LORD shall be revealed" so that "all flesh shall see it together," as the grand presage to its higher exhibition in the light of eternity."

When a few more generations shall have passed away, the world shall witness the unearthly pageant of the *second advent*, when God's annointed comes in the clouds of heaven, attended by the retinue of the skies. Up, then, ye sons and daughters of godly sires, crowned with the light of knowledge and robed with the loveliness of virtue. Up and away upon your heavenly mission, and with the warm blood of a christian ancestry in your veins, seek to "prepare the way of the Lord," and to "make straight in the desert a highway for our God." For ye are destined to be the honored bearers of an undying faith to our waiting posterity.

The venerable and the loved who, for nearly half a century, have stood in the van of your coming hosts, shall soon have closed their humble career and have gone to the rest of their fathers. Sinking under the weight of years and of toils, but still glowing with the ardors of parental love, and kindling into rapture under the inspiring visions of the text, their longing hopes delight to linger about your footsteps, and point your young ambition to the spiritual conqueror's crown.

Upon the prowess of your right arms, then, sustained by Jeshurun's God, must rest the future honors of Zion; and with their dying blessing, they commit to your defence the unfurled banner of the cross, still proudly streaming from her blood-stained ramparts.

But suppose your fathers die. What at last is the *tomb* of superannuated nature but the *cradle* of a *new life*, soon to be unfolded in the

brightening evolutions of Bible prophecy, and in the maintenance of the mighty scheme of human salvation? Move fearlessly and faithfully onwards, then, ye rising thousands of the young, to greet the glorious future. The high carnival of the assembling nations approaches. Let your children's children, through successive generations, swell the gorgeous procession which comes down the path of ages to hail the millennial grandeur of God—the Messiah's reign; gaze with the redeemed and purified millions upon the "glory of the Lord," revealed in earth and air and ocean, and join with the sacramental host in the long, loud acclaim which rolls with the tremors of an earthquake through the arches of the echoing skies, "Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

MAN SUBJECTED TO THE LAW OF SUFFERING.

BY WHITEFOORD SMITH, D. D.,
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"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—Hebrews v, 7, 8, 9.

Every one who has been observant of what takes place around and within him, has, no doubt, often been perplexed by what he has witnessed and experienced. Perhaps in reference to no class of subjects is this more common than to that which relates to the sufferings of men. The exclamation is frequently heard, "What a mysterious dispensation of Providence!" If any one is overtaken by adversity, and reduced from a comfortable estate to comparative poverty, it is regarded by many as something strange; though such occurrences are by no means rare. If one is found laboring under a chronic disease, or some bodily infirmity, or if a sudden death is announced, it is often remarked, "How extraordinary!" If a husband and father is taken away from a dependent family, and a wife is made a widow and her children fatherless, or if a statesman dies in the midst of some important public business, or in some critical period of his country's history, it is declared to be a most mysterious dispensation. It might thus be supposed that such events but very seldom occurred, and that their infrequency made them startle us, and that they were utterly inexplicable upon any principles of reason or religion. But if we will take the trouble to remember and to reflect, we shall find neither the one nor the other of these suppositions to be correct. If men were left entirely to the light of their own unassisted reason, they might be at a loss to discover the design of many of the evils which they witness in the world, and of many of which themselves are the subjects. But it has pleased God in his infinite goodness, to reveal to us his will, and much of the darkness and mystery which shrouded

his plans of operation has been removed, and they have been made easy of comprehension by the light of revelation. The patient and prayerful study of this subject will often convince us that our opinions have been erroneous and our judgments sadly at fault in the views we have taken and the conclusions we have formed touching the divine administration. Despite all the evils which we see around us in the world, despite all the pains and sorrows we have felt ourselves, the pious inquirer will join in the declaration of Scripture—"The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."

The text suggests two propositions:

1. That in our present condition the law of suffering is a great universal law of our nature.

2. That the discipline of suffering is necessary to perfect us in all holy obedience to the will of God.

I. In our present condition the law of suffering is a great universal law of our nature. The history of the world is the record of this truth. The consciousness of every man is its inward attestation. From the day of the first transgression until now the family of man has become subject to this law. The first utterances of humanity are cries of suffering—its last expressions are groans and sighs. No favored spot of earth has been found, no matter how salubrious its climate—how grand and gorgeous its scenery—how clear its crystal waters—how brave and generous its people—where the wail of the sufferer is not heard. The generations of men as they successively followed each other have uttered the same lamentations over the miseries of life, and patriarch and sage and philosopher have all wept over its disappointments and vanity. So uniform in this respect has been the experience of men that they have united in designating the scene of mortal life a "vale of tears."

If we confine our views of suffering merely to the physical evils which men endure, we shall form a very inadequate idea of its true extent. But there are sufferings vastly greater than the burning fever or the aching limb. All the anxieties and tears and griefs of humanity are to be computed in this reckoning. The baffled labor, the disappointed hope, the fruitless research, the unrequited affection, the broken ties of friendship and of love—all these are to be embraced in the estimate of human suffering. And when we have thus united

the cries of infancy, and the tears of helpless womanhood, and the wretchedness of disappointed manhood, and the despair of old age dying in sin—from the cabin, and the hall, and the palace, and the battle-field—what an aggregate of suffering does humanity exhibit! And yet all is not known, for the artificial caprice of society seeks to hide its sorrows from the gaze of the world, and many a face which is wreathed with smiles would be a false index to the aching heart.

Nor let it be supposed that the assertion that humanity exists under an universal law of suffering is rebutted by the numerous joys which vary the scene of life. Neither the existence nor the universality of suffering depends upon its constant continuance. The very constitution of our nature is such that were man all the time subjected to pain, it would become his fixed habit; and custom renders agreeable what was originally unpleasant, and even suffering, if constant, would cease to be suffering. So, many who for long years have suffered under a painful and incurable disease, become so accustomed to it as to cease to complain, and bear with comparative indifference what to others would be torture. The great design of God in placing us under the law of suffering is best accomplished by an occasional exemption from the severity of its pangs. Yet, while it is admitted that the sky of human life is not always black with lowering clouds, that ever and again some bright and beauteous ray beams upon the pilgrim's path, how much of truth is there in the Poet's words:

"Poor wand'rers of a stormy day,
From wave to wave we're driven!
And fancy's flash, and reason's ray,
Serve but to light the troubled way;
There's nothing true but Heaven."

But the most striking proof of the truth of the position that humanity exists under a great universal law of suffering, is found in the fact brought so forcibly to view in the text, that even our blessed Redeemer, while He condescended to wear our nature, was not exempt from its severest application. Surely it might seem to our weak apprehension, that a voluntary divesture of His glory for a season, and the assumption of our nature apart from its pains and sorrows, would have been a sufficient humiliation, and an unspeakable manifestation of His love. But not so thought the Infinite wisdom. When He took our nature, He took it with all its liabilities to ill. It was deemed a necessary part of His education for the great office He was to fill for us, that He should learn by painful experience what

are the temptations and sorrows of humanity. He was to drink of our cup with all its bitterness. He was to be poor, and slighted and spurned by the great, betrayed and deserted. He was to feel all the intensity of agony of which our nature is susceptible, and that fear by which for ages it had been haunted. He was to know our infirmity, to feel our weakness, to utter the cries for help which we utter, to mingle his tears with ours, to shudder, shrink, and fear to die The language of the Apostle in the text seems almost extravagantly bold when he speaks of Jesus offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death. But, daring as the words appear, they are borne out by the record of His life and death. To His agony in the garden, doubtless, the Apostle referred. Amazing scene! baffling all attempt at description; awakening wonder that can never be satisfied. The Son of God, the first-born and the only begotten of His Father, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, bearing the form of a man, and approaching the crisis of His human fate, struggling with the fear of death and crying to be delivered from it, saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Need we wonder, then, at the terror which death has awakened in the frail children of our race? If He, the mighty conqueror, who even now was about to vanquish the foe, trembled and sweat great drops of blood as the hour of conflict drew near, oh! need we wonder, if

"The pains, the groans, the dying strife,
Fright our approaching souls away;
And we shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay?"

To all the sufferings appointed to man, Christ himself was made subject. This "fairest flower that ever bloomed upon the stalk of humanity," this Rose of Sharon, this Lily of the Valleys, was not exempted from the fury of that dread storm which had long been beating upon the less honored plants in the garden of life. And, surely, if He enjoyed no exemption, we have no right to expect a suspension of this law on our behalf; "for the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."

Nor was it intended that His *sufferings only* should be exemplary of ours. For our encouragement, no doubt, it was written, He "was *heard* in that He feared." Whether these last words be taken, as some have supposed they should be, as assigning His piety or fear of

the Lord as the reason why He was heard; or, which is perhaps better, that He was heard in respect to that thing which He feared, that is, death; the declaration still remains the same, He was heard. His prayers and supplications were not offered up in vain; His strong crying and tears were not unanswered. And if the arm of the Almighty was adequate to the deliverance of the Captain of our Salvation in the greatest emergency ever known to man, how strong the assurance given to every trembling saint that the divine grace shall be found all-sufficient in his sorest need. Thus may He be our example, not only as a sufferer, but also as a sufferer delivered.

The other general position proposed in the text, is—

II. That the discipline of suffering is necessary to perfect us in all holy obedience to the will of God.

If this proposition were not true, it might be considered an objection to the first that it was inconsistent with the character and administration of God as infinitely good and loving, that He should place man under a law of suffering. But it must be borne in mind that the sufferings of the present time are not merely nor chiefly penal, but disciplinary and corrective. Cases there have been and are, in which, even here, the Almighty vindicates His insulted throne, and visitations of suffering are sent in judgment upon the ungodly. And it is, doubtless, wisely ordained that in the present life suffering should often be the consequence of sin, that men may learn how ultimately certain is the connection between them. But we find suffering now not confined to the wicked, but the wise and the virtuous and the good are alike subject to this general law. If these, in common with others, are visited with affliction and pain, we must turn to the Word of God for the explication of what would seem inconsistent alike with His justice and His goodness. The text solves the mystery of suffering virtue when it declares of Christ himself, that "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Or, as the same Apostle expresses it in the second chapter of this epistle, "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings." No position can be more evident than this, that if the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man, could only be fitted by sufferings for the great design He had come into the world to accomplish, if sufferings were necessary to the

completeness and perfection of His character, much more must the like discipline of suffering be necessary to fit us for all the will of God concerning us.

Broadly has this great principle been stamped upon the history of the world and the characters of men. Who have attained to the high ends of even a worldly ambition without toil and sorrow? What prices of human suffering have not been paid for the acquisition of a desired good? What enterprise of true grandeur has been achieved without privation and sacrifice? Some useful invention has cost the discoverer years of patient toil and self-denial and voluntary poverty, perchance more, the loss of health or even life. For the attainment of an enviable fame, weariness and solicitude and mortification have been cheerfully endured. The liberties of a country have been won or preserved by the noble sacrifice of fortune and of life on the part of its sons. In every age of the world, and under every dispensation of religion, the good have attained their goodness by self-abnegation and suffering. True nobility of character is not to be reached by the idle or the frivolous. It is the exercise of the heroic mind in encountering and overcoming difficulties, in bearing trials and enduring sorrows, that raises it to that great superiority where it becomes the object of admiration to generations.

So, too, in christianity. It has its appointed labors, its crosses, its sufferings, for every votary who would reach the heights of its glory. Was it not this conviction of the necessity of suffering to a perfect obedience to the will of God, that prompted that strong aspiration of St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Was it not this which enabled Him to set a proper estimate upon the sufferings of the present time when He reckoned them "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us?" Was it not this which dictated those noble words, "What, mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

From the beginning of the gospel this truth has been openly proclaimed. Christianity has not sought to gain disciples by any promised exemption from suffering; but, on the contrary, it has made a readiness to endure affliction for Christ's sake a necessary antecedent

lation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer."

And what hinders that the same principle should find its application also to all christians? The pre-eminent law of the gospel dispensation is the law of Charity or Love. For the fulfilment of this law, in its high and broad signification, it is essential that the ties of sympathy should bind us together. It is not enough that we are of the same race—it is not enough that we are of the same country or district or town—it is not enough that we are even of the same family—it is important that we are partakers of the same infirmities and sufferings. No one who has not himself suffered understands well how to enter into the feelings of a sufferer. The children of a family who have stood together around the grave of a parent feel that the sorrow of which they are sharers in common, constitutes an additional bond to their mutual affection. The husband and the wife whose lives may have before passed on in comfort, perhaps in affluence and luxury, when overtaken by adversity, realize more fully the sacredness and closeness of their relation, and find that the fiery trial is the means of welding together their hearts in perfect unity. In the prosperous seasons of a community, every one seems engrossed in his own pursuits, busy with his own schemes, intent upon his own aggrandizement. The sordid selfishness of our nature is in the ascendant, and no one has time to consider his neighbor's interest. But when the "pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day" are abroad in the city, when the voices of lamentation are heard in every street, and sorrow sits brooding in every house; oh! then, how are the tears of sympathy poured out, and the hands of charity opened and the hearts that were hard are softened, and the men who had been as strangers remember that they are neighbors and brethren. And all this is the effect of sufferings which they have shared in common. With what joy does an aged veteran meet his old companion in arms, and call to mind the privations and dangers they have experienced in a long campaign. The pauper has been known to divide the alms he had received with a co-partner in misery, and the lame have been seen tottering to the table of the Holy Supper leading the blind.

A mistake is sometimes made even by good and pious persons, in supposing that they are not submissive to the will of God because they feel their sufferings so acutely. Their tears will flow under a

sense of pain or bereavement, and they think such tears are indications of a rebellious spirit. But such is not always a correct judgment. A stoical indifference is not christian resignation. If we did not *feel*, we would not suffer; and it is the suffering which is to teach us obedience. Nor is it the evidence of a want of submission to the Divine will when we ask relief from pain, or ease for a troubled mind, or deliverance from doubt and fear. The example of our Lord in the text is strikingly in proof of this. He, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death.

This subject suggests three reflections, each of which is very full of comfort.

1. Our sufferings here are *not accidental*, but are either appointed or permitted in the providence of God. "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." How appropriately did the Psalmist rebuke the rising murmur, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." To see and recognise God's hand in our afflictions is the privilege of every christian. And how greatly is the pain assuaged when we view it as coming from our Heavenly Father. Our comfort, too, is still increased when we remember—

2. That all our sufferings here are designed for our profit, and are working out our good. Infinite wisdom sees them necessary, and infinite goodness adapts them to our strength. Fathers of our flesh "for a few days chastened us after their pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Precious thought! The chastenings of his children are not in anger but in love; not destructive but corrective. And though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

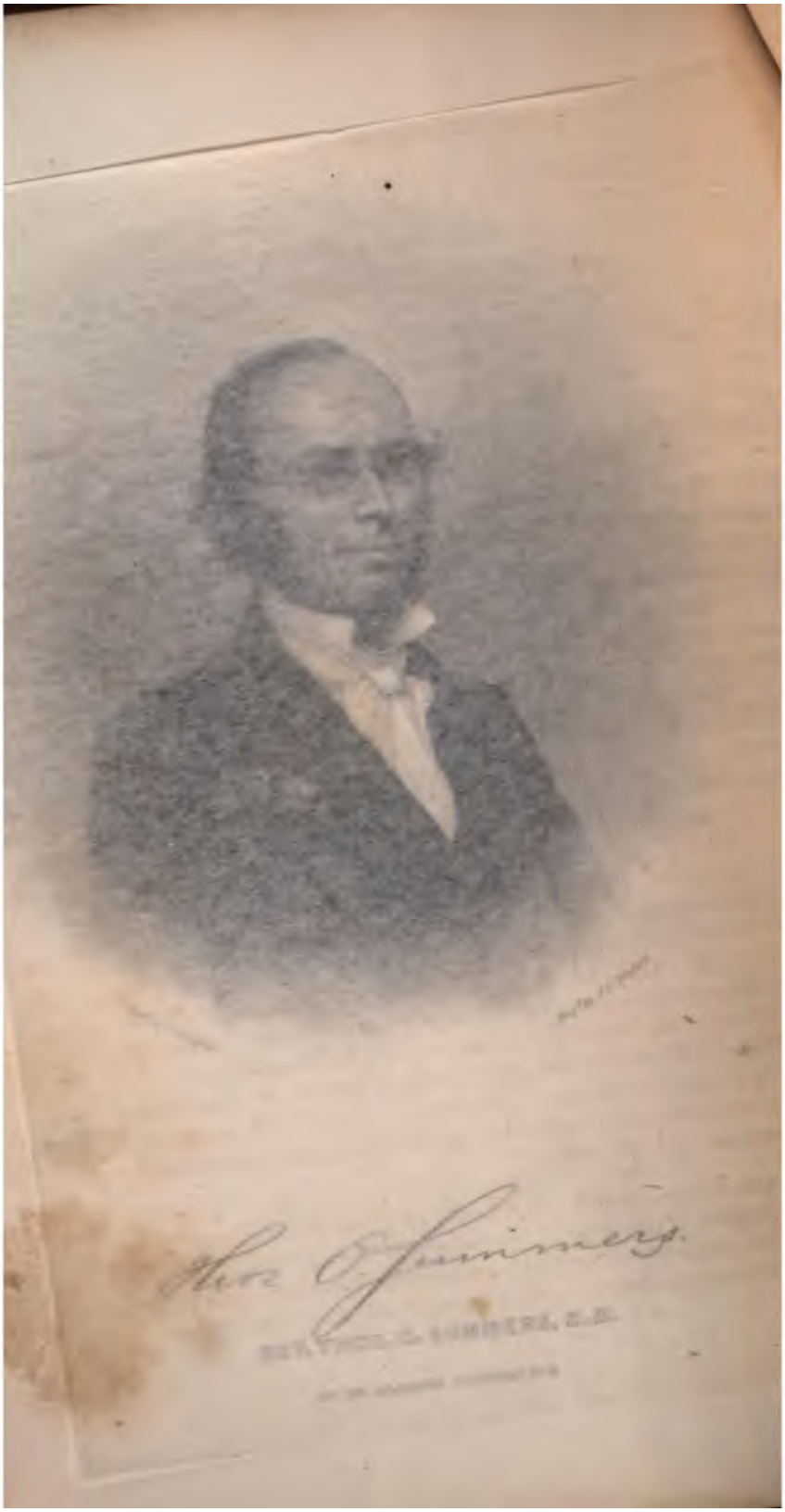
To these let one other reflection be added—

3. In all our sufferings we have the tender sympathies of our Great High Priest and Redeemer. For it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren for this very purpose, that he might "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." We are not left to bear

our sorrows in solitude and desolation, without pity and without sympathy. If cut off from human relationships, and shut out from the communion of kindred hearts, there is ONE whose ubiquity assures us of his presence, whose love secures our hope, whose sufferings are our warrant of his sympathy.

" In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part
He sympathises in our grief,
And to the suff'rer sends relief."

To him, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory. Amen.



THE OBJECTS OF ANGELIC CURIOSITY.

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"Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Peter i, 12.

A strong desire to find out something unknown, either by research or inquiry, is characteristic of a great mind. It is predicated by the apostle of the ancient prophets. Those wonderful men, influenced by Divine inspiration, uttered predictions concerning the mysteries of redemption, which were astounding to themselves as well as to others. A holy curiosity was excited in their minds, and they "inquired and searched diligently" into the hidden meaning of their sublime announcements. They endeavored to find out the nature of the salvation they predicted, and the time of its accomplishment. Nor were they singular in this; the angels themselves evinced a similar curiosity. Indeed, they evince it still—they manifest a constant "desire to look into the mysterious things" of our salvation.

There is a kind of curiosity which is contemptible. It consists in a pragmatical disposition of the mind, an incontinent inclination to pry into matters, whether lofty or low, which are entirely beyond one's province—a quest of information about things which do not concern us at all. Thousands who manifest no avidity in pursuit of "the knowledge fit for man to know," let no opportunity escape to approach the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and pluck its forbidden fruit. Curiosity is laudable only when its objects are proper. The things which the angels desire to look into are worthy of their highest and most intense concern, as they combine novelty, grandeur, and importance, on the largest scale.

LET US FIRST NOTICE THE NOVELTY OF THESE THINGS:

They are developments of Divine mercy and compassion.

The angels had witnessed exhibitions of Divine power and wisdom in their own creation and in the creation of the universe at large—so

also of benevolence, of which, in a thousand modifications, they were the happy subjects. These perfections of the Deity were variously and gloriously manifested in the origination, maintenance, and government of all the worlds that had been called into existence. And there had been also a display of the severer attributes of the Divine Majesty. Angels had fallen from their pride of place. *When* they fell, and *how* they fell, we know not. From an incidental expression of the apostle, we may suppose that pride or ambition was the sin which occasioned their overthrow. It could scarcely have been a meaner crime than that which has been poetically and paganizingly defined, "the glorious fault of angels and of gods." Certain it is, they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." They fell—self-tempted of course, and this perhaps was the reason that no redemption was provided for them. They were hurled at once from the battlements of heaven, shut up in the prison-house of hell, and bound with chains of darkness, as culprits under a terrible sentence and waiting its execution. What a development of inexorable justice and vindictive wrath! This the holy angels witnessed; but they had never witnessed any expression of mercy and compassion—the former requiring sin for its elicitation, and the latter connoting misery, neither of which had any place in heaven or any relief in hell.

But when, through the envy, malice, and subtlety of the devil, man had fallen, the Divine benevolence received a new modification, developing itself in forms adapted to the character and condition of lapsed humanity. The sin and misery of man drew forth the mercy and compassion of God. These lovely qualities of the Divine nature mingled harmoniously with all the other attributes of the Most High, and produced the plan of redemption, which is the mystery of the universe and the problem of eternity. No sooner did the mighty and merciful design beam forth from the countenance of the Godhead, than angelic curiosity was excited to comprehend it.

There was the gracious purpose of God—they were eager to unfold it. There was the primordial promise—they reverently cast an inquisitive glance towards the Only-begotten of the Father, as if they would know from himself whether it were possible that He should become the seed of the women to bruise the serpent's head. There was the stellar light of patriarchal revelations—through this medium they sought to penetrate the mystery in which the wonderful arrangements were involved. There was the lunar light of the Mosaic dispensa-

tion—they strained their vision to avail themselves of its aid. And, finally, the solar light burst forth in its effulgence upon our world; and, though dazzled with its splendor, they gazed with interest still more intense upon the wonders it revealed.

It cannot be doubted, that, by the constant application of their powerful minds to the all-absorbing subject, they acquired considerable knowledge of the principles, as well as the facts, constituting the great mystery of our redemption. The information thus gained, bears, however, but a small proportion to the wonders yet to be revealed, and serves to sharpen their appetite and increase their thirst for evangelical knowledge. They learned more of the Divine nature in watching the openings of the scheme of redemption, than they could have learned in millions of ages through any other medium.

"Part of thy name divinely stands,
On all thy creatures writ;
They show the labor of thy hands,
Or impress of thy feet;
But when we view thy strange design
To save rebellious worms,
Where vengeance and compassion join
In their divinest forms,
Our thoughts are lost in reverent awe,
We love and we adore;
The first archangel never saw
So much of God before."

No wonder, therefore, that the angels are ever ready to leave their ancient seats, singing still, or suspending their songs, wending their way to earth, the favored theatre of Divine mercy and compassion, impelled by an irrepressible desire to look into these unexampled and astounding things.

LET US GLANCE FOR A MOMENT AT THEIR GRANDEUR:

Those developments of grace are made on a most magnificent scale.

Look at the extensive preparatory arrangements of the gospel. These could not fail to attract the attention of the angels, who must have seen, from the vast and towering scaffolding of the earlier dispensations, that an edifice of wonderful magnitude was to be erected. They would endeavor to penetrate the cloud which enveloped the ancient economies, and to find out the character of coming events by a careful observation of the shadows which they cast before them. They saw something in the ancient ritual beside the imposing pageant.

In priest and victim, altar and sanctuary—in the multifarious ceremonies and services of the Levitical religion—they did not fail to note the preparatory, adumbrative character of the whole. The mysteries typified were those things which the angels desire to look into. Indeed, this is intimated by the term used in the text. It means *to stoop*, or *bend over*, this being the posture of one who desires to look into a thing attentively; and the reference seems to be to the cherubim over the mercy-seat in the most holy place. They were represented as bending over the ark of the covenant, which, with its sacred contents and mystic associations, was typical of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The covering of the ark, in particular, was styled the mercy-seat, or throne of grace, in reference to the "propitiation" which in due time was to be set forth, to declare the righteousness of God, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Once a year, on the day of expiation, the blood of atonement was sprinkled by the high priest upon the mercy-seat, over which was the symbol of the Divine presence.

In the ark were the tables of the law—an indication that the holiness they enjoin can be realized only in connection with the scheme of redemption by virtue of the atoning blood. There, too, was Aaron's rod that budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds, determining by this miracle the sacerdotal prerogatives of the Levitical tribe. It was laid up in the ark, not only as a memento of the fact, but also as a type of the unchangeable and everlasting priesthood of the Son of God, and of the subordinate priestly prerogatives of all his people. The golden censer, from which ascended a sweet-smelling savor, was emblematical of the prevalent intercessions of our great High Priest, and also of "the prayers of all saints," which, through his mediations, go up with acceptance before God. The manna, too, laid up in the ark in the most holy place, not only commemorated the miraculous support of Israel in the wilderness, but also typified the bread of life, of which if a man eat he shall live forever. Into these mysteries—integral portions as they were of a great symbolical system—the angels are represented as desiring to look, in order to find out their evangelical import.

Then there were the prophecies, stretching through forty or fifty centuries, calling forth the faith and exciting the hope of the ancient church. Many of these predictions, indeed, had reference to collateral points, such as the fortunes of empires, states, and individuals;

but when the grand scheme is unfolded, and the connections are traced in the light of fulfilment, we find that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." There was not one of the ancient oracles but had reference, direct or indirect, to the Redeemer that was to come out of Zion. This the prophets knew, even though they could not comprehend the full import of their own predictions. The angels also were advised of this, although their information was vague and general, like that of the prophets. But there was too much pomp and circumstance—too much heraldic form and ceremony—too much system and solemnity in these oracular announcements, to allow of their being considered fugitive in their interest and temporary in their issues. They were not given all at once, though they were given in great profusion. They stretched along an extended line, having for its *termini* the promise in Eden and the *benedictus* of Zacharias. Systemize the predictions, which, without the appearance and affectation of system, are scattered munificently along the line of the past, and you have the anticipated history of our redemption. What a work, my brethren, for angelic minds to gather those evangelic elements, arranging and combining them, thereby enlarging their information concerning those things which they desire to look into.

There is, moreover, a concatenation of providential arrangements having reference to the great salvation. The general history of the ancient world presents to our contemplation little more than a desert waste; yet there is a verdant stripe which, however narrow at some places, extends entirely through it, cheering the eye of the beholder. We trace it from Simeon and Anna to the Maccabees; then to Malachi, Isaiah, Elijah, David, and Samuel; then to Joshua and his renowned predecessor; then to the father of the faithful; then to the second father of the world; then to Enoch, Seth, righteous Abel, and the progenitors of our race. Without excluding from the regards of heaven all who did not belong to "the chosen seed,"—for Job and his three friends, and millions beside of other nations, were in favor with God—what a series of miracles and marvels do we discover marking and making illustrious the path of Providence over which we have passed. With what interest would the angels notice the occurrence of those stupendous events which betokened the redemption of our race. Their curiosity would be the more excited as they themselves were frequently employed in embassies both of mercy and vengeance to the children of men. Jacob saw them in his vision,

ascending and descending the mystic ladder—acting as couriers between heaven and earth, being engaged in ministering for them who were to be the heirs of salvation. Sometimes they were sent forth with some special message to the chosen servants of God—sometimes to pitch their tents around the dwelling place of the righteous, or to bear them up in their hands to secure them from harm—sometimes to deal out summary retribution upon the foes of God and his saints. Myriads of them were with Jehovah "in Sinai, in the holy place," for the law was given "by the disposition of angels." How desirous must they have been to find out the full spiritual import of the communications of which they were the channel of conveyance, and to comprehend the ulterior design, the evangelical bearing, of the services which they were constantly rendering to the church under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. They longed for the fulness of time to come, when "the Lion of the tribe of Judah should prevail to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." They knew well enough that this was his prerogative. They had seen him many a time assume a vehicle like that in which they invested their own spiritual essence, in order to execute such functions among men as were not proper, perhaps not possible, to be executed by any angel except the angel of the covenant. And as they were frequently privileged to accompany him in his pre-advent missions to our earth, with what interest would they mark all his movements, and wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. They knew that the Jehovah of the Old Testament was to be the Jesus of the New; and by marking his revelations in the former character, they would be able to divine somewhat concerning those that were to take place in the latter. Our adorable Redeemer was "seen of angels," and that, too, on earth as well as in heaven, long before "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." How must this have inflamed their desire to look into the mysteries of our redemption!

But the grandeur of those things increases on our view. The developments take place on a more magnificent scale. "For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given." All heaven is in a holy commotion—the seraphic choirs are transported with jubilation and wonder. There is not an angel that does not want to vacate his throne and come down to earth, "to learn new mysteries" in the contemplation and study of this stupendous event. Gabriel has already been employed in preparatory ministrations in reference to its accomplish-

ment; and not all the harps of heaven can keep him from earth, when the virgin mother brings forth her Son. With what surpassing beauty is the scene portrayed by the pencil of inspiration: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." He had not been an unobservant, unreflecting agent—a mere mechanical channel of communication between God and man—he had studied well every message he had been honored to convey, and had penetrated to the utmost possibility the design of every movement in which he had been concerned. Nor was he singular in this. For "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

By this time they had acquired so much knowledge of christian theology that they could push their inquiries, and pursue their investigations, with greater facility and more satisfactory results than before. For good and sufficient reasons, inspiration is well-nigh silent concerning the boyhood of the holy child Jesus. But we hazard nothing in affirming that the angels were ceaselessly crowding around Him, holding Him in constant survey. They were, doubtless, rapt in admiration when they saw Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; and they were astonished, as well as others that heard Him, at His understanding and answers. They came and ministered unto Him, when, on His entrance upon His ministry, He had so terrible an encounter with the prince of darkness. In short—

> "In all His toils and conflicts here
> Their Sovereign they attend,
> And pause, and wonder how, at last,
> This scene of love will end."

They beheld Him with mute astonishment when He endured that tremendous agony in the garden. How intensely did they apply themselves to the study of that mystery, which, after all, they failed to comprehend! They could "strengthen Him in the hour of darkness," by pointing to the joy that was set before Him, in view of which

He drank the bitter cup; but they could not find out the ingredients of that mysterious draught. They were poised upon their pinions over the Cross, while

> "Amazed they saw that awful sight,
> The Lord of Glory die."

There was not an angel in heaven whose eyes were not fixed upon Calvary. And when it was finished they accompanied His spirit in silence to paradise, and detailed a guard to linger around His sacred tomb, waiting the moment to arrive when His soul should remain no longer in the separate state, and His flesh, not seeing corruption, should awake from the dust of death. How ready were they to roll away the stone from the sepulchre, and sing their rising God!

> "Their anthems say, Jesus who bled
> Hath left the dead, He rose to-day!

And when the time arrived that the heavens must receive Him,

> "They brought His chariot from the skies,
> To bear Him to His throne,
> Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
> The glorious work is done!"

But all this did not satisfy their curiosity. Their desire to look into those things was indeed gratified by the discoveries they had made, but it was rather excited than satiated. All the angels of God worshipped the ascending Conqueror, and tendered their fealty to the King of Saints. With what readiness did they offer their services! With what alacrity did they execute their functions in promoting the interests of Messiah's kingdom! With what exultation did they mark the triumphs of the gospel—making common cause with their junior brethren on the earth, rejoicing with them over the repentance of even a single sinner, because every such event weakens the powers of darkness and strengthens the sacramental host, prepares for the colonization of heaven, and the filling of the thrones made vacant by the fallen angels, and thereby illustrates and magnifies the Divine perfections!

And as the magnificent scheme of redemption embraces the entire course of earth and time, their desire is perpetuated through every succeeding age, and they are this moment as intent upon making fresh discoveries in the science of salvation as they were the day of the date of the first promise—indeed, far more so, for their holy curiosity grows by that which feeds it, and it has long since become an

ardent and unquenchable passion. They are now looking forward with intense interest to the fulfilment of the glorious predictions concerning the overthrow of all anti-christian powers, and the universal diffusion of truth and righteousness; their harps already tuned to send forth the response of heaven to earth, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" And if they are so joyful to bear the ransomed spirits of all ages to Abraham's bosom, what will be their joy when sent forth to gather together God's elect from the four winds, to escort them, body and soul, to heaven, heralding them in their ascension and triumphant entry into the metropolis of the universe, the city of the great King—their own bright and everlasting home! This, in fact, is with them the great and absorbing event. They look forward to it with the deepest interest. They know that then the great scheme of Providence will be unfolded and explained: God will justify His ways to men. They will listen to the songs of saints, and thunder forth the rapturous chorus, Worthy the Lamb!

Such, my brethren, is the grandeur of those things which the angels desire to look into—this is the magnificent scale of their development. We marvel not at the excitement of angelic curiosity in reference to mysteries so sublime.

LET US BRIEFLY NOTICE THEIR IMPORTANCE.

They were developed for great ends. The designs had in view in the mystery of redemption involve the eternal destiny of our world. But for the great salvation which was projected before the ages of time, man would not have been created with a liability to fall through the voluntary perverse exercise of his moral powers; or, having fallen, he would have received in his own person the penalty of his own fault. He would have died the threatened death, without being permitted to propagate his species to partake his corrupt nature and heir his ruined fortunes. They never would have had any other than a seminal, potential existence—which amounts to no existence at all. This is the certain and satisfactory conclusion of reason, revelation being silent on the subject, as it is on all similar negations.

But in view of the great redemptory scheme, man is created; and when he falls from his perfection and forfeits his paradise, a gracious reprieve is afforded him, and he is permitted to propagate his species, and the command, so pregnant with Divine mercy, so exuberant in benevolence, is again enjoined, "Be fruitful and multiply, and re-

plenish the earth." And, as the provident father of a young and increasing family, the Most High has made all necessary arrangements for their support and happiness. As he "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," so He "hath not left Himself without witness, in that He is continually doing them good, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." These temporal bestowments of the universal Father are identified with the great system of redemption, and reach us through mediatorial channels. There is no intercourse of any sort whatever between heaven and earth, except through the intervention of the Son of God.

It is not possible, my brethren, to exclude the things of earth and time from the arrangements of the great plan of salvation, as earth and time sustain an introductory and probationary relation to the eternal state. A moral character, therefore, attaches to our most secular concerns; and the legitimate use or the abuse of this world, contemptible as it may be in our estimation, will most certainly affect our whole eternity.

If these inferior things are of so high concernment, who can estimate the importance of those things which constitute the spirit and essence of the great mystery of salvation? How momentous the questions: "What must I do to be saved?" "How shall man be just with God?" "What good thing must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And, without controversy, the infallible and satisfactory solution of the problem they propose can be furnished alone by the oracle of inspiration. The gospel alone contains the religion of salvation, and that is the only religion adapted to man. The principles which it reveals, and the facts it unfolds, and these alone, can subserve the interests of man's eternity. We do not, indeed, affirm that none can be saved without becoming acquainted with the gospel and comprehending its character; but we do affirm that none can be saved except upon the basis which it exhibits—the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We still further affirm, that none to whom the gospel is proclaimed can be saved, if they neglect the great salvation which it proposes. It is thus a mighty agent, either for salvation or destruction. And in this respect the ministers of the gospel are a savor of death unto death, or of life unto life, according as their message is rejected or embraced by those to whom it is offered. With what im-

portance does this invest the mysteries of revelation! No wonder the angels desire to look into them! It is true,

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love;"

so that they cannot tell, by their utmost penetration, what transports fill the souls of the ransomed, pardoned, and sanctified children of earth—what ecstacies they realize when, free from mortality, they triumph over death and the grave; or what glories await them in their consummation of bliss around the throne. Yet they know that through the mysterious connection of Divinity with humanity in the incarnate Word, and the almost equally mysterious connection of humanity with Divinity in the case of every believer—for every believer is made a partaker of the Divine nature—such a dignity is stamped upon man, who was made a little lower than themselves, that he is ultimately exalted above them—such a variety and affluence of heavenly and beatific objects are subjected to his control, and introduced to his experience, that the inheritance of the saints in light is more eligible than that of the first-born sons of God.

Indeed, the developments of the plan of redemption, so far as we can discover, involve the destinies of the universe. Whether or not the multiplied millions of worlds that revolve in immensity are inhabited with intellectual and moral beings—if so, whether or not any of them have fallen, like our own—if they have, whether or not they have been redeemed—these, and other questions equally curious, we have no means of answering. By a course of analogical reasoning, many philosophers have conducted themselves to the conclusion that those worlds are inhabited. If they be, it is not reasonable to suppose that their inhabitants will never be made acquainted with man and his fortunes. If they be unfallen, their intercourse with the universal Parent and Sovereign, and especially their final beatification, will put them in possession of the astounding facts which belong to the history of our planet. Besides, every creature—every intellectual being in the universe—has received his existence from the Saviour of our race, and owes him eternal allegiance. And we are assured that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth—that is, throughout the universe—and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. A knowledge of his mediatorial character seems to be implied in the homage thus rendered; and this involves

the mysteries of redemption. What influence and effect this knowledge will exert and produce upon those distant inhabitants of the universe, we cannot tell; but so far as the angels are concerned, it is generally believed that although the Redeemer of man did not take upon him their nature, so that the fallen angels are not redeemed by his merits, yet the holy angels are confirmed thereby in a state of purity and bliss. Dr. Donne does not scruple to say: "Lest this world should not afford him sins enough, he took upon him the sins of heaven itself; not their sins who were fallen from heaven, and fallen into an absolute incapacity of reconciliation, but their sins which remained in heaven; those sins which the angels that stood would fall into if they had not received a confirmation given them in contemplation of the death and merits of Christ—Christ took upon him; for all things in heaven, and earth too, were reconciled to God by him." The doctrine which is thus somewhat boldly stated, was generally received by the scholastic divines, and it is hypothetically set forth by one of our own poets, who thus apostrophizes these glorious intelligences

"Angels, rejoice in Jesus' grace,
And vie with man's more favored race;
The blood that did for us atone
Conferred on you some gift unknown;
Your joy through Jesus' pains abounds,
Ye triumph by his glorious wounds.
Or, 'stablished and confirmed by him
Who did our lower world redeem,
Secure you kept your blest estate
Firm on an everlasting seat;
Or raised above yourselves, aspire,
In bliss improved, in glory higher.
Him ye beheld, our conquering God,
Returned in garments rolled in blood!
Ye saw and kindled at the sight,
And filled with shouts the realms of light,
With loudest hallelujahs met,
And fell, and kissed his bleeding feet.
Ye saw him in the courts above
With all his recent prints of love,
The wounds! the blood! ye heard its voice
That heightened all your highest joys—
Ye felt it sprinkled through the skies,
And shared that better sacrifice.
Not angel-tongues can e'er express
Th' unutterable happiness,

Nor human hearts can e'er conceive
The bliss wherein through Christ ye live;
But all your heaven, ye glorious powers,
And all your God, is doubly ours!"

The language of the Apostle, to say the least, seems to give countenance to this belief: "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself: by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The fall of man alienated him, not only from his God, but also from all the unfallen subjects of the universal King. To countenance the rebel would have been constructive rebellion. By the purity of their nature, and their fealty to their Sovereign, angels were, therefore, bound to set their faces against this revolted province. And though this may have involved no real abatement of their bliss, and though the dire contagion of man's revolt might not have extended to their happy abodes, yet the fall of man prevented that accession to their happiness which would result from intercommunication with a holy and happy race, and *threatened*, at least, their own stability. They were necessitated to enforce a rigid quarantine, which must have been eternal but for the plan of redemption and its glorious issues. Through Christ man is not only reconciled to his God, but also to the holy angels. They descend to earth again, with songs more joyous and triumphant than those which they sung at the birth of creation. And the mysteries of redemption, involving the tragedy of the Cross, constitute a moral lesson for the universe, which may prove an effective means of preventing another revolt among the armies of heaven. It will not only confirm their virtue, but also augment their happiness—it does augment it now, while they are looking into those things and ministering "for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And when the great scheme shall be unfolded, and the light of eternity shall be shed upon those mysteries, their

knowledge will be indefinitely increased and their bliss proportionally enlarged. "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

It requires no effort to show that the glory of God is involved in the great issues of human redemption. As the plan is unfolded, what light is cast upon that wisdom which devised it; which so arranged all its parts, so adjusted all its provisions, as to secure the greatest possible good to the greatest possible number of intellectual, moral, and immortal agents—the salvation of millions of our rebel race, without compromising the justice and judgment of His throne, or hazarding the fealty of other intelligences!

What a triumph of benevolence, that where sin abounded grace should much more abound, and yet that grace be so displayed, as that those who are the subjects as well as those who are the spectators of its manifestation, should derive from it no encouragement to sin, but rather be held thereby in willing captivity to the obedience of Christ!

What an exaltation of Divine power, which controls all the agencies of earth and time, of heaven and hell—which so overrules everything in the universe as to defeat the designs and subvert the usurped authority of the devil, causing "all things to work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose!"

The glory of God in redemption, where He shines forth in His "whole round of rays complete," will constitute the theme of everlasting admiration for angels as well as men. The ceaseless investigations of their inquisitive and powerful minds will constantly add to their knowledge of the Most High, and furnish the subject-matter of the new, eternal song.

What a reflection on us, my brethren, if we are unconcerned about those things which the angels desire to look into.

They are not so bound on the score of duty and interest to look into them as we are. Bound, indeed, they are, by both considerations, but their obligations in the premises are but secondary to ours. They are but *remotely*, we are *directly*, interested in these things. It was not for angels, but for us men, and for our salvation, that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

He took not on him the nature of angels, nor are angels privileged

to become partakers of his nature, in the glorious and mysterious manner in which we realize communion with him, and therefore they are not so favorably circumstanced as we are to look into those things. And yet, beloved, how indifferent are we in regard to them, while angels are always prying into them. And is it so that nothing but obscurity and distance can lend enchantment to the view of those scenes whose novelty, grandeur, and importance throw everything else in the universe into the shade?

What a reproach on us, my brethren, that we are disposed to look into other things, and neglect those which the angels desire to look into.

The current things of earth that engage our attention perish with their using, and are unworthy of our solicitude. And yet how solicitous are we about them. Trifles light as air loom up before our eyes with infinite importance, and all our energies of body and soul are summoned to their pursuit. Heaven be merciful! What fatuity!

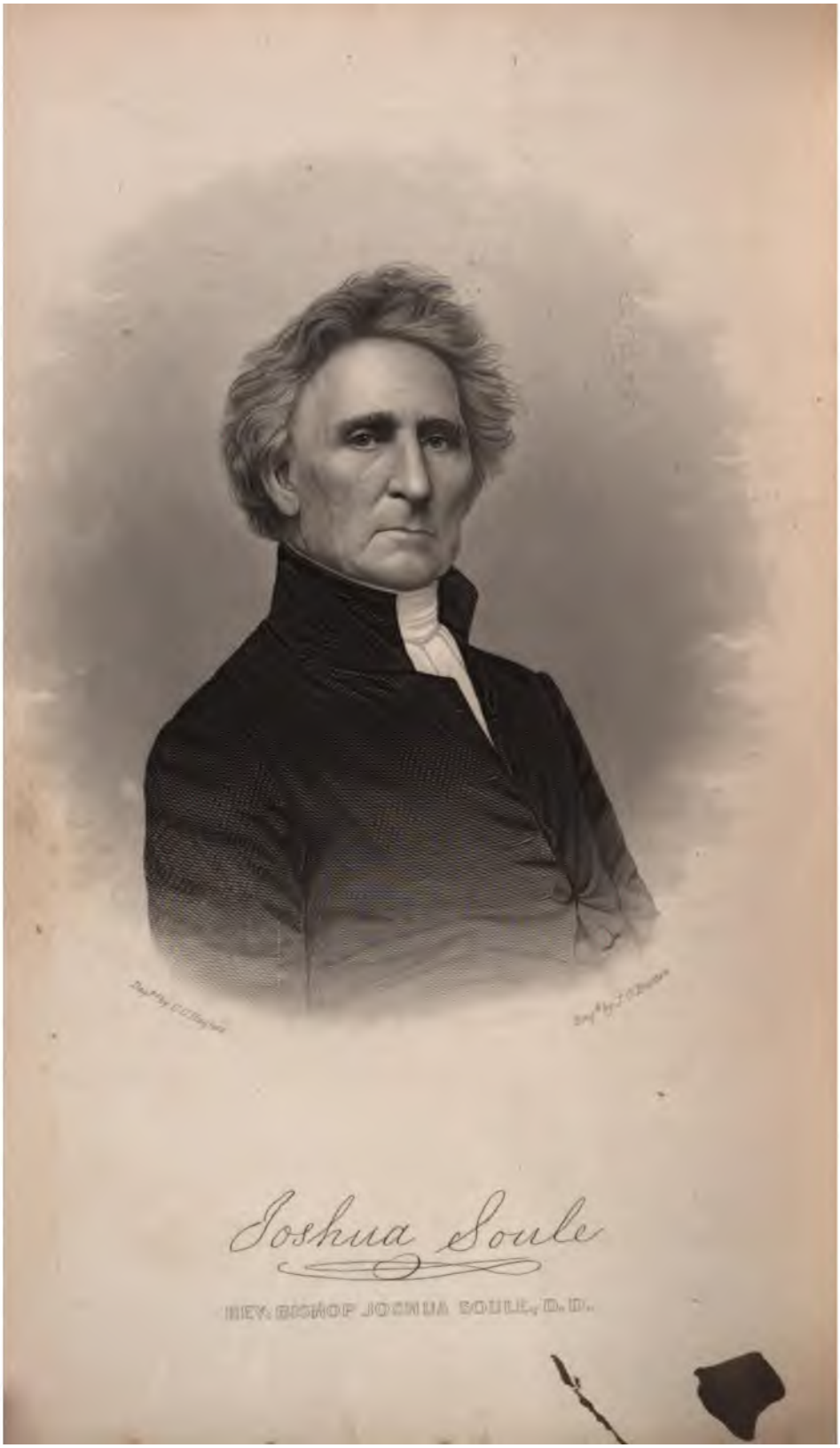
The noblest subjects which engage our attention and absorb our interest are not equal to those within the range of angelic minds, and yet these are scarcely noticed by the angels when the mysteries of redemption are brought to view. To what knowledge can we attain, in nature and philosophy, in science and art, that angels cannot attain in thousand fold measures? so much greater is their intellectual strength than ours, and so much more favorably circumstanced for such discoveries are angels than men. And yet the wonders of creation are subordinated in their estimation to the greater mysteries of redemption; and although they never cease to inquire into the former, their interest in them is proportioned to the relation which they sustain to the latter. In this respect, my brethren, what a contrast do we present to the angels. A Herschell or a Rosse shall be immortalized for the resolution of the *nebulæ* or the discovery of a planet, while Gabriel turns aside from millions of suns and multiplied systems of worlds to range through the moral heavens and strain his eye to look at "the bright and morning star!"

Alas! for us, my dear brethren, we are an enigma to the angels. They see us toiling, and panting, and sweating in the pursuit of the unsatisfying pleasures, the contemptible honors, the perishing goods of earth, instead of stretching every nerve and taxing every muscle to secure the joys of God's salvation—nobly and resolutely refusing

to glory save in the cross, and pouring contempt on every treasure except the unsearchable riches of Christ.

> "Michael has fought our battles, Raphael sung
> Our triumphs, Gabriel on our errands flown,
> Sent by the Sovereign; and are these, O, man,
> Thy friends, thy warm allies? and thou (shame burn
> Thy cheek to cinder) rival to the brute!"

My brethren, if, as children of the resurrection, we expect to be made like unto the angels, let us imitate them in their desire to look into those things which to us are of so vast importance. Would to God you could every one exclaim with the noble-minded apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."



Joshua Soule

REV. BISHOP JOSHUA SOULE, D. D.

THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY.*

BY JOSHUA SOULE, D. D.,

NOW SENIOR BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."—James i, 25.

A superficial attention to the gospel of Christ, both as it is recorded in the sacred writings, and proclaimed by its appointed ministers, may justly be considered among the principal causes of its partial success, either in regard to its influence over the heart and life of man as an individual, or its spread and establishment among the nations of the earth. Our Lord has sufficiently admonished us of the different effects which the ministry of his word would produce, according to the manner in which men received it, in the memorable parable of the sower and the seed. Four different classes "hear the word," but it is finally successful only in one. Hence that important caution, "*Take heed how ye hear!*" A large proportion of those who hear the "word preached," or read it in the "lively oracles," regard it rather as a matter of theory, or abstract science, than as a subject of experience and a rule of practice. Hence the best sermons, while they have been approved, admired, and applauded, have neither changed the hearts nor reformed the lives of the hearers. If at any time the light of truth has forced its way to the conscience, so as to disclose the deformity and the consequence of sin, like a man who beholds his natural face in the glass, they have gone away, and soon forgotten what manner of persons they were.

Of the importance and necessity of a *practical application* of the truths of the gospel, on the part of those who hear them, our blessed Saviour has informed us, at the close of his instructions in his sermon on the mount: "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,

* A Sermon preached in Augusta, Georgia, January 14, 1827, before the South Carolina Conference.

and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded on a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, *and doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

In this most striking representation, both the characters described are *hearers* of the sayings of Jesus Christ. The fearful difference therefore in the final issue is, the result of *doing* or *not doing* the things they heard. If the preaching of the word is unprofitable, it is because it is not mixed with faith—even that faith which is unto obedience—in them that hear it. It might be supposed that the pretensions of the gospel were sufficient to induce all men to a careful examination of the evidence on which its claims are founded; but more especially that the *admission of its truth* could not fail to produce a deep and lively interest in it. But, alas! what multitudes who profess to believe it to be a revelation from God, hear it, not as the *gospel of their salvation*—not as the only way of their reconciliation and eternal life—but rather as a subject with which they have little or no personal concern. To all who hear the sayings of Jesus Christ in this manner, the gospel will be a "savor of death unto death." "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

In the improvement to be made of this subject, we will—

1. Consider the character which the apostle has given of the gospel of Christ; and,

2. The concern we have with it. And may the Holy Spirit, on whose agency the success of our efforts depends, enable us to speak and hear the word to profit—that we may obey from the heart the "form of doctrine" delivered to us, and know the truth that the truth may make us free.

I. The character which the apostle has given of the gospel.

By the gospel is to be understood, the system of divine economy in the salvation of sinners, by the mediation of Jesus Christ; embracing all the doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings, re-

vealed and made known by Christ and his inspired apostles. This grand system of human salvation has frequently been considered merely as a development of the divine benevolence, or a display of the abundant mercy of God to sinners, without due regard to the great designs of moral government, in the establishment and preservation of order among men, as intelligent beings and accountable agents.

There is indeed no correct view which we can take of the "*gospel of the grace of God*," in which it does not appear to be "*glad tidings of great joy;*" but if it has any one attribute which excels another, as a ground of joy and gladness, it is that which provides for and enjoins obedience to the will of God, and requires holiness on earth as necessary to happiness in heaven. Such, we conceive, is the character which St. James has drawn of the "glorious gospel." It is a *law*—a law of *liberty*—a *perfect* law of liberty.

First. The gospel of Jesus Christ possesses the properties of law. It makes known the true character of God as our divine lawgiver. The works of creation, and the order established in the kingdom of nature, display the perfections of the Creator, and on this account may be called a law. "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." But the revelation of Jesus Christ makes manifest all the attributes of the divine nature—all the moral as well as the natural perfections of him whose *habitation is eternity*. It clearly declares the unity of God, and the harmony of all his glorious attributes in the moral government of the world.

The gospel *imposes obligations* from God. It teaches us the relations existing between God and us, and the obligations founded in those relations. He is our *creator*, and we are his creatures, his workmanship. He is our *preserver*, and we the subjects of his constant and efficient agency. "*In him we live and move and have our being.*" He is our bountiful and gracious *benefactor*, and we the partakers of his continual care. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." He is our redeemer, and we are his purchased inheritance. He is our governor, and we are his lawful objects. Out of these relations,

made known by the gospel revelation, arises an *obligation* to acknowledge God—to reverence and worship him—to love and obey him. But obligations are still more strongly imposed by a clear declaration of the *will of God* concerning man, in the form of *positive commands*. The gospel "commands all men everywhere to repent"—to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves; to love our enemies; to do to others what we would have others do to us. Hence, according to the constitution of the economy of salvation by grace, we are obligated by the *express commands of God* to the performance of duties clearly pointed out. This we conceive to be a distinguishing attribute of law. Our views of the gospel, in its legal character will be further improved when we consider it as *prescribing a rule of obedience*. All the precepts of Jesus Christ sustain this character. All his instructions relative to the government of our hearts and lives; in a word, all which he has taught us *to do*, must be considered in this light. It is only necessary to examine with due care the sermon on the mount, that grand constitution of God's kingdom among men, to be fully convinced that he who is our "wisdom and righteousness" has taught and enjoined a system of moral rectitude far more explicit and extensive than the decalogue itself—even extending to the most secret "thoughts and intents of the heart."

But if the gospel furnishes precepts for the direction and government of human actions, those precepts are attended with the most authoritative sanctions. Promised rewards and threatened punishments accompany every rule of life prescribed in the new covenant. The rewards of the kingdom of grace upon earth, and of the kingdom of glory in heaven, are promised to those who obey the truth. But to the workers of iniquity the most fearful punishments are threatened, even everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. On this important point in our subject we desire to be distinctly understood. The penal sanctions, the terrible denunciations against the impenitent, unbelieving and disobedient, belong as really to the gospel, as the promises of pardon to the repenting sinner, or of eternal life to the persevering believer. It is as clearly the work of the gospel to *condemn* as to justify—to *punish* as to *save*. He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. Both are parts of the gospel economy—both regard gospel obligations, and can regard no other. In both the language of the gospel is heard. The ministers of Jesus Christ have,

therefore, no occasion to borrow the "terrors" by which they enforce their message from Mount Sinai. The Mount of Olives will furnish them with more efficient motives. If they would move men by fear, they should point them to the "judgment seat of Christ," where they may "know the terrors of the Lord.

We have only to add that the gospel of Christ will be the *rule of judgment in the last day*. This is inseparable from the view we have taken in the previous observations. For the precepts of Christ, being the rule of obedience, must govern the process of judgment in the final issue. "So speak ye, and so *do*, as they that shall be *judged by the law of liberty*." Our Lord has established this point in the most indubitable manner, in His description of this grand event, recorded in the gospel by St. Mathew. The Son of Man sitting on the throne of His glory is the judge—all nations are gathered together before him—He divides them as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats—the sheep are set on his right hand, and the goats on his left. "Then shall He say to those on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." No comment of ours can enlighten this scene. If any thing further is necessary to heighten the awful majesty and grandeur of the gospel in its character of law, the apostle to the Gentiles will supply this lack. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, *and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*." The conclusion is, that as the gospel *reveals the character of God;* as it *imposes obligations* from Him; as it is a *rule of obedience* attended with the most *solemn sanctions;* and, consequently, the *rule of the process in the final judgment*, it contains all the essential attributes of law.

Second. The gospel is the law of liberty. It has released man from his original relations to the law given to Adam in a state of innocence He is no longer held obliged to the performance of the righteousness of that law, as a condition of life, and consequently is not condemned by it. This is a point of so much importance in the scheme of salvation, that the character of the gospel dispensation can never be clearly apprehended without it. Man, with *all his obligations*, and with *all his responsibilities*, is transferred from the Adamic covenant, the law of works, to the covenant of grace, the law of liberty; and this change of his relation is by virtue of the redemption of Christ. Being "bought off from law," he has become obligated to Christ, whose law he is bound to obey.

The gospel is the law of liberty as distinguished from the law of Moses, and as it frees men from the obligations of that economy. Of the whole *Mosaic dispensation*, the apostle St. Peter says, "It is a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." It bound those who were under it to the observance of a legal and ceremonial righteousness, which could never remove the *guilt*, or the pollution of sin. The most that could be said, even of that which was "*written and engraven in stones*" was that it was a "*ministration of condemnation and death*," and served as a "schoolmaster to Christ." But when the righteousness of faith was fully come, in the dispensation of Christ, there was no farther need of a schoolmaster. All the offices of the law ceased, when Christ came as our perfect teacher, priest, and ruler. The yoke of the law is removed, and the *easy yoke* of our *gracious Mediator* is only obligatory on us. All men being brought under the obligations of the gospel covenant, and thereby delivered from the law as given to our first parents in the garden, and to the Jewish legislator at Sinai, are the proper subjects of Christ's government. They are *free to* choose Christ as the captain of their salvation — to become subject to the laws of His kingdom, and enjoy all the privileges and immunities of the children of God. Were we to contemplate the gospel of Jesus Christ, as *effecting the liberty of sinful man*, in no other view than that we have just taken, it might be supposed that every *fallen spirit* embraced in its gracious provisions would hail its manifestation with "exceeding joy." But the liberty of the gospel extends much farther, even to a deliverance from the bondage of iniquity. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death." It "pro-

claims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." By a *mighty energy* it subdues the reigning power of sin, and brings into captivity those enemies which had captivated our souls before. Sin is represented as a powerful tyrant, strengthened by the force of the law, holding his vassals in chains, while the wages of his service are death. From this dungeon of sin and death, the miserable captive is heard to groan, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" The gospel, my brethren, answers to this unutterable groan. The gospel binds this "strong man," this "man of sin," thus armed, and sets his prisoner free. The gospel delivers men from the guilt and condemnation of sin, in the act of pardon. It frees them from the power and dominion of sin by the grace and strength which it supplies. It delivers them from the slavery of their passions and lusts, and restores the dominion of reason and conscience in their minds.

Man is "subject to bondage through fear." Conscious of his accountability, his sinfulness and guilt; and knowing that it is appointed to him once to die, and after death to appear in judgment, he trembles at the thought of his approaching dissolution, and fears to appear in the presence of his judge. *Reason* affords him but a feeble support in the hour of his alarm and trial. Her lights are but dim through the dark valley he has to pass, and she casts but a "glimmering ray" on the scenes of eternity which lie before him. What shall dispel his doubts, remove his fears, support his trembling spirit, and illuminate his pathway? What shall fortify him against the terrors of these tremendous events? The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which "life and immortality are brought to light." "The gospel of the grace of God," the fountain of pardon and purification in the grand atonement. The foundation of a steadfast and "lively hope" in its exceeding great and precious promises.

Finally. The gospel is the law of liberty, because it provides for, and will effect the deliverance of our bodies from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Death must be swallowed up in victory, and its empire demolished. The grave must deliver up its prisoners, and be spoiled of its dominion; and mortality be swallowed up of life, under the reign of God's Messiah. Oh, what a "glorious liberty" indeed will be the portion of the children of the first resurrection, over whom the second death shall have no power, when the grand end of the *mediation* of the *Son of*

God shall be accomplished in the fulfilment of that saying, "Behold I create all things new."

Third. The gospel is the *perfect* law of liberty. It is perfect in itself. There is no obscurity, no weakness, no deficiency, in any part of it. As a system of doctrine, it contains every truth necessary to be known in order to salvation. Is it necessary that man should know God? The gospel has revealed Him. It declares the nature of the Divine essence: "God is a Spirit." It asserts His unity: "To us there is but one God—God is one." It proclaims His omnipresence and eternity—His omniscience, infinite wisdom, and almighty power—His righteousness, justice and truth. It makes known the *will of God* concerning His creatures, both with regard to *action* and *end.* It declares His goodness, tender mercy, patience, long-suffering, and loving kindness in a thousand varied and endearing forms. In this grand manifestation of God there is no darkness, no veil; but all is light—*perfect light.* Here we behold the Divine glory beaming forth with transcendant brightness. Is it necessary that man should know himself? The gospel teaches his *origin* and *end*—his *fall* and *recovery*—his *obligation* and *accountability* It settles with infallible certainty the immortality of the human soul, and a future state of being. Is it necessary for man, *fallen and guilty man*, to understand how he may regain the favor of God? how he may be introduced to communion and fellowship with his Creator, and finally obtain everlasting life in heaven? The gospel revelation is a perfect directory. The way to the kingdom of heaven is drawn in sunbeams. Neither clouds nor darkness rest upon it. He that runs may read. Who that examines with due attention the records of Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles, can say, "*I know not the way to heaven*"?

Nor shall we find the gospel less *complete*, if we examine it in regard to the evidence of its divine origin, the proofs of its authenticity. Its truth is attested by the *light* of its doctrines—by the *extent* and *purity* of its morality; by the *benevolence* of its designs; by the *fulfilment* of ancient predictions; and by the *life*, *miracles*, *death*, and *resurrection* of its author. What *assurance* has the christian, from this body of evidence, that he has not believed a "cunningly devised fable," in embracing the gospel of his salvation?

That which is perfect in itself needs no *foreign aid*, no auxiliary help, in order to the accomplishment of its ends. This is the true character of the gospel. *It contains within itself all which is neces-*

sary to the present and eternal salvation of sinful man. It needs no aid from the Adamic or Mosaic law; but is the end of both for righteousness. The doctrine, therefore, that sinners are under the *law, as distinguished from the gospel,* is both erroneous and dangerous. There is *no act* in the entire scheme of mediation by Jesus Christ, which affects the relation of a sinner to law, *thus distinguished,* but the act of *redemption by His death.* This is not a *continued act.* It was "finished" in the *one offering* of the body of Christ on the cross. Consequently, if sinners are under any law, except the law of liberty, the law of the Mediator, there is no provision for their deliverance. Offences under the second covenant are put away by pardon. But those under the law require atonement, because no provision was made for their remission. We have no occasion then to employ the law to bring men to Christ — to use the terrors of the first covenant, to introduce sinners to the blessings of the second. It is enough that we "preach Christ" in all his offices, pointing *all men* to "*one law-giver and one judge, who is able to save and to destroy.*"

The gospel possesses a peculiar perfection in the nature, extent, and efficacy of the grand atonement. Here all its excellences centre. This is the foundation of the entire and perfect building. The nature of the atonement made by Christ cannot be apprehended aright, unless it be considered with *direct reference* to the *law of God given to man in a state of innocence, and to sin as the transgression of that law.* The plain scriptural doctrine is, that the sacrifice of atonement is a perfect satisfaction of the demands of that law against man as a transgressor; that its threatened penalties were borne by Jesus, as man's surety. By this *sin offering,* Christ has not only expiated the guilt of original transgression, and delivered the whole human race from the curse, or punishment of eternal death, which the law annexed to sin: but also "bought man off" from the law itself, as a rule of justifying righteousness, and restored him to a new trial, under the gracious dispensation of the gospel, where obedience to the *righteousness of faith* is required to justification and eternal life.

But for whom was the atonement made? What is the extent of the redemption which is by Christ Jesus? If it is partial, if it is limited to a part of "those who have sinned," it is *imperfect*; it is *defective* in every point. The law is magnified and made honorable

but in *part*. Divine justice, with regard to the original transgression, is satisfied but *in part*. Those who are not redeemed are under the righteousness of the Adamic law, as the only rule of justification, and consequently subject, by inevitable necessity, to all its terrible punishments. Redemption by the death of Christ, alone, places man within the possibility of salvation. It is not possible, therefore, that any should be saved for whom his blood was not shed. To all such, if such there were, invitations to look to Christ, to believe on him, to be saved by him, would be but a mockery of their impotence and their misery. But, blessed be God, it is as broad as the transgression, and as deep as the guilt of man. It extends to every human soul, to every fallen child of Adam. As certain as all have sinned, so certain is it that Jesus has died for all. For all who were under the "curse of the law," Christ has given himself a ransom. "For God sent forth his Son to *redeem them that were under the law*;" having concluded all in unbelief, or shut them up for disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all, in his unspeakable gift. The atonement then is universal in its extent, all men being redeemed by the death of Jesus. But the expiatory sacrifice of our divine Redeemer is as perfect in its efficacy, as universal in its extent. It was not possible, indeed, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin; either its guilt or its pollution. But "*the blood of the everlasting covenant*" can purify the conscience from both, and make us "*perfect in every good work*." The fountain of redeeming grace is deeper than the "troubled sea" of our corruption. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The doctrine, therefore, that sin must cleave to the soul of man, till death dissolves the union between the body and spirit, is not only repugnant to the plain testimony of the divine oracles, but also an *undervaluing* of the efficacy of that precious blood which "*cleanseth from all sin*." Here, perhaps, it may be supposed we might safely close our observations on the perfection of the gospel system, and leave our hearers to infer from the premises a thousand traits of fitness in detail. But there is one more view of the gospel, as a law of liberty, which we deem of the utmost importance. We mean its *perfect agreement or suitableness to the condition of man as he is—a fallen, weak, and guilty creature*; in a word, as a *sinner*. If we examine the law of God, even as given to Adam, or Moses, we shall find it *perfect*, and *without defect*, considered *in itself*. For verily, "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and

good." Proceeding from God, the fountain of holiness, justice, and goodness, it must necessarily possess these attributes. It may, therefore, be justly called a "transcript of his nature." Nevertheless, there was a *relative imperfection* in the law. There was *something* in the condition of *a sinner*, to which it was not suitable; *something* which he could not do, being weak through the flesh. And on account of this weakness it was unprofitable, it made *nothing perfect.*

The law was unsuitable to the condition of a sinner, in regard to salvation; first, because it knew no repentance of the offender, as a condition of justification and life; second, because it made no provision for the putting away of sin, either by *pardon* or *purification*; third, because it required a righteousness which a *sinner* could not perform; and, fourth, because the penalty of death was annexed to transgression. The law, therefore, could not give life; but was a "*ministration of death.*" It could only "work wrath;" so that by the *deeds of the law* no flesh could be saved. In all these respects the law had no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God. For through Jesus, our Mediator, we have access to God; the middle wall of partition which the law interposed being removed out of the way. If, in examining the *relative character* of the gospel system, we shall detect any point in which it is *unsuitable* to the state of man as a *fallen creature*; if he is not brought *completely* within the province of its operations: if it should be found to *require any thing of man*, as necessary to salvation, which he is not *furnished with ability or power* to perform; then, indeed, may it be said of the gospel, as it is said of the law, "*It is weak through the flesh.*" It makes nothing perfect. Establish man's inability to perform the conditions of the gospel covenant, and you tarnish the glory of the covenant itself; because you prove it to be *relatively defective.* Indeed, for aught we can see to the contrary, you make salvation as impossible to man, under the gospel, as under the law; unless it be presumed that God will dispense with the performance of the terms of the covenant. It is of no *conceivable importance* in what this *inability* consists, or by what name it is called. Call it *natural or moral inability*, or by any other name you please, and the grand difficulty remains the same. Whether this fearful *inability* lies in the regions of the understanding, or of the heart; in the *physical* or *moral* constitution of man, is a matter of perfect indiffer-

shall only employ it as an occasion more *abundantly to magnify* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and still proclaim, with joyful exultation, where *weakness abounded, through sin*, there *strength does much more abound through grace*. Has the gospel invited all men to come to Christ, as their all-sufficient Saviour? That invitation is proof—ample proof—that all men have, through grace, ability to come to Christ, in obedience to the invitation. It is then the peculiar glory and excellence of the gospel, that it "*helps our infirmities*," as well as convinces us of them. Have all men sinned and come short of the glory of God; and is it therefore necessary that all men should repent? The gospel provides for it. Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance. This is the very ground of the divine command. "The times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The grace of the gospel *supplies the means* and the *ability* to repent, and to do works meet for repentance.

Are men by nature strangers and aliens — at a distance from God, far off by wicked works, without hope and without God in the world? The gospel has opened a way for their return—taken down the separating wall, and brought in a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God. It is the ministry of reconciliation, under which "strangers and foreigners" become fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Here we have free access to the mercy seat. No flaming sword is set to guard the throne; no terrible voices and thunderings to drive us from the presence of Him that sits upon it. The voice which is heard issuing from the divine presence is the voice of invitation and of promise—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Is man dead—spiritually dead—utterly destitute of the life of God? Dead, even in trespasses and in sins? The gospel is *life, spiritual, eternal* life. It is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, delivering us from sin and death. The gospel, therefore, possesses a peculiar relative perfection. It brings light to our darkness; strength to our weakness; pardon to our guilt; liberty to our bondage; relief to our misery; and life to our death. There is no case to which it does not apply; to which it does not bring adequate help. O, the length, the depth, the breadth, and height of the gospel sal-

vation! O, what amazing *wisdom* in its *adaptation!* What *power* in its *agency!* What grace in its fulness! Grace abounding to the chief of sinners. O, that we could all unite, this saving grace to prove! If the views we have taken of the perfect law of liberty are agreeable to truth—if the gospel is indeed such a scheme of salvation as we have endeavored to represent it to be, it follows that *every human soul* has a deep and eternal interest in it. Let us, then, consider—

II. The concern we have in it.

Having occupied so much of the time allotted for this service on the former part of the subject, it becomes necessary that we be very brief on the latter. Indeed we can do little more than bring it into view and leave it for the improvement of our hearers. We have a two-fold concern with the gospel; a concern of duty or obligation; and a concern of interest or privilege. As a concern of duty or obligation, we are required to *examine it attentively and carefully.* The gospel addresses itself to our understanding. It is a grand harmonious system. It professes to be a revelation from heaven, and to support its claims by the authority of God himself, having the present and eternal salvation of man as its object. Whatever right of government or control the Deity might claim over his sinful creatures, it has pleased him in this most merciful economy to *stoop down* to our low condition — *to instruct us, to reason with us, and to invite us to reason with him.* It becomes us, therefore, to *listen attentively* to his instructions, and to *examine carefully* the message he has sent us. This is the import of the emphatical words in the passage before us: "But whoso *looketh into* the perfect law of liberty." This *looking into* the gospel, is opposed to hearing in such a superficial way as to leave no *deep* and *lasting impressions* on the *memory;* as to *produce no settled resolutions of the mind* in regard to practice. It is very justly supposed that our apostle has reference in this expression to the *inclining* and *fixed posture* of the cherubims, with their faces towards the mercy seat. The evangelist has used the same word in regard to the attitude of the disciples when they visited the sepulchre of Christ, after his resurrection. Now, as the faces of the cherubims were fixed towards the mercy seat, which was an expressive representation of the gospel, and as the disciples of Jesus *stooped down* to look *narrowly* into the sepulchre of him who was the

author of life, and on whose resurrection all their hopes depended, so should we, with *fixed attention*, with *intense application*, examine the gospel of our salvation. Examine carefully the evidences of its authenticity, that you may arrive to a full conviction that it is the *truth of God*. *Look narrowly* into all its characters of fitness and perfection, that you may apprehend what it *requires of you*, and what *help it affords you*. Be careful in your examinations not to overlook its *preceptive purity* in the *splendor of its promises*. Consider it in the analogy, proportion, and harmony of all its parts, and in the suitableness of the whole to the grand end it proposes to accomplish. Remember that this business requires *time* and *labor*. It is not the work of the hour you spend in the house of God, in hearing the word of the gospel from the lips of his ministers. Stated periods should be devoted to this important employment. Nor is it to be supposed that any considerable improvement will be made till we settle it in our minds that *our religious concerns are paramount to all others*. When this conviction is "deep rooted" in the soul, complaints of the want of time will cease.

The mind must be disciplined to meditation upon these things. Habits of indolence are to be overcome. Our indisposition to *thinking* must be subdued. But it is not enough that we look narrowly and diligently into the perfect law of liberty in the way of examination. We have a far more extensive concern of duty and obligation with it. It is the rule of our obedience. It is Christ's yoke which we are obligated to take upon us. In vain do we hear the sayings of Jesus Christ, and with our lips call him Lord, Lord, if we *do not* the things which he has commanded. "Be ye, therefore, *doers* of the word, and not *hearers* only, deceiving your own selves." Whether we hear the word preached, or read the lively oracles—whether we visit the house of worship, or meditate upon the revelation of God at our own houses, all should be done with a special reference to practice; with a *fixed resolution to do* what we learn to be the will of God concerning us. 'Patient continuance" in this great work, both of acquiring the knowledge of the gospel, and of obeying from the heart its sacred precepts, is of indispensable obligation. Multitudes have commenced the work, and run well for a season; but not "continuing therein," have fallen short of the prize. To "obey the gospel," therefore, and continue in our obedience till the reward of the inheritance is obtained, is our duty.

But we have a concern of interest, of privilege, in the gospel; and our interest in it is designed as a powerful motive to action. It is emphatically, *the gospel of our salvation.* It *provides* and *makes known* the way, the *only way* of salvation. There is *no other* ground of hope—*no other* means of access to God—*no other* ministry of reconciliation—*no other* law of liberty—*no other* fountain of pardon, peace, and life. If we fail of being saved by the gospel, we are lost—*inevitably and forever lost.* What an interest have we, then, in this scheme of salvation. Add to this the *blessedness* of those who look into the gospel, and continue steadfast in sincere and humble obedience to its holy commandments. The blessings of pardon, peace, and holiness, are their inheritance on earth, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, their portion in heaven.

To conclude: Let us examine ourselves closely in regard to the improvement we have made of the blessed gospel of God our Saviour. We have heard it, perhaps, from our childhood. We were early taught to read the sacred writings which contain the doctrine, and precepts, and promises, and threatenings of Jesus Christ. We have professed to believe these writings as of divine authority — to receive them as the records of eternal truth. But *how* have we heard the gospel proclamation? *How* have we read the divinely inspired pages? What estimation have we made of the revelation given us from heaven? What experimental, what practical, uses have we made of those truths we have heard, and which we profess to believe? Are we not, even to this day, hearers of the word only, and not doers; deceiving our own selves? What influence has the gospel had on the state of our hearts, or the actions of our lives? Have we been awakened, justified, regenerated, through the ministry of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Have we been made free by the law of liberty? Free from the guilt, power, and pollution of sin? Free from the dominion of our passions and lusts? Free from the bondage of fear—fear of death and of judgment? Alas! are we not, even while we hear the proclamation of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, under captivity to the law of sin and death? How has the "wicked one" catched away the word of the kingdom in the very act of hearing it! How little have we been profited, either by the preaching or reading of the word, for the want of humble, active faith! O, let it suffice that we have heard so many sermons in vain — that we have attended the house of God so often

without repentance and conversion. Let us immediately awake out of sleep, and receive the truth, that the truth may make us free. O, let us look into the law of liberty with deep and interested attention. Has Jesus Christ declared that except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish? that except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven? that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God? And can we hear these weighty and solemn declarations of the Son of God, without reflection—without a direct application to ourselves—without laying our hands on our hearts and proposing to ourselves these serious questions? Has the work of repentance ever been wrought in this heart of mine? Have I ever been converted to God? Have I ever been born again? Has this great moral change ever been effected in this fallen soul of mine?

Is it possible that we can hear from the lips of Jesus Christ the certainty and strictness of a future judgment, and not enter into the interests of that awful transaction? Is it possible that we can read on the pages of that revelation which bears the seal and signature of Jehovah himself, that they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation; that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal—is it possible, I say, that we can read these sayings of the truth of God, without a pause, a solemn pause, succeeded by an inquiry of all others the most important? How shall I leave my tomb? with triumph or regret? On which hand of the eternal Judge shall I stand? What will be my doom? Shall I hear it said to me, Come ye blessed, or, Depart ye cursed? Terrible thought indeed! What! to hear the voice of my once gracious and most merciful Redeemer pronounce the dreadful word, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" O Jesus, thou whose arms were once extended on the cross, cast those arms of bleeding mercy around the speaker and his hearers. Other refuge have we none; hang our helpless souls on thee. May we not hope that the gospel will, this evening, be a savor of life unto life to many of these precious souls? Why this silent, fixed, solemn attention reigning through this vast assembly? Why every eye fastened, and expressive of the sensibility of the soul? O Lord, thou knowest. Is it not that thy holy spirit has reached the hearts, while the feeble voice of thy servant

has sounded in the ears of this people? To thy name be all the praise. O for a trumpet voice, on all the world to call. O that I could point this whole assembly to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Those arms of love that compass me, would compass all mankind. May the Son make us free that we may be free indeed! AMEN.

CHRISTIANITY REASONABLE IN ITS DOCTRINES AND DEMANDS.

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"Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine."—Mat. xxv, 24, 25.

I do not purpose to comment on the crime and punishment of the servant who buried his talent. There was little committed to his trust—a single talent; he is charged not with throwing it away or spending it sinfully, but merely with failure to improve and increase it: Nevertheless, he is condemned as wicked and slothful; the one talent is taken away, and he is cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Fearful warning to every unprofitable servant! Friend, have you received the grace of God in vain, or are you growing therein? Are you doing anything with your talents, five, two, one; or lie they idle? God grant that you may be a good and faithful servant—commended and rewarded as such in the day of reckoning!

But I will not now pursue that line of thought. I quote the servant's vindication of his own conduct as substantially agreeing with the excuse you often make for the neglect of duty, viz: the severity and even impracticability of the Divine exactions. You recoil, I grant, from the daring profanity of calling God a *hard Master;* when tried by His word and found wanting, you may not be so bold and so blasphemous as to assert your own innocence, and impeach Him of injustice in His requirements; you may refuse to utter such words, or

entertain such reflections in their naked impiety: and yet, in the secret chambers of the heart, unsearched save by His all-piercing and all-comprehensive gaze, lurks there not the thought, unexpressed, scarce acknowledged to yourself, that His demands are austere and unreasonable? Is not that the true rendering of many disguised arguments with which you repel the personal appeals of the preacher or other christian friend? Whether you sneer at the hypocrisy and inconsistency of the Church in general; or select some individual member for your censure; or complain that there are so many mysteries in the Bible, deep, dark, incomprehensible, so that you know not what to believe or what to do; or rail at the clashing creeds and fierce contests of christian sects among whom you cannot tell where you shall find the safest guide, and whose endless diversities leave little chance for falling on the one true faith—whatever special form your reasoning may assume, yet, inasmuch as you are held to responsibility by God and not by man; inasmuch as no conduct of your fellows, who are equally with yourself His subjects, can release you from obligation to His service or screen you from His judgment, is not the simple amount of all these pleas an attempt to clear yourself by charging God? Do you not virtually affirm that you are required to pursue a path which you are unable to discover, and to perform duties which exceed your utmost strength; that it will not be right in your Judge to punish you for the lack of a religion you can neither understand nor practice?

Suppose I were to admit your assumption thus far, that the dread Being with whom we have to deal does exact a difficult service at our hands, and seems, both in the measure of His requirements and in the terror of His retributive justice, to have little respect to human infirmities and the disadvantages of our condition, may I not turn your argument against yourself? May I not say, as the Lord said to His servant, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant?" Let all you say be true about the hard commands and the harsh judgments of God, yet as you are in His power, impotent to break His grasp or bear His wrath, the very austerity of His character, the very rigor of His law, should make you the more careful and diligent and untiring in doing the work assigned you; for if you be idle and negligent, if you make no effort to do what you can for Him, how unfit you are to be measured by so strict a rule, and how

heavy must be the penalty affixed by so stern a Judge? O, think what it is to be weighed in a balance so exact! O, tremble before God who holds a rod of iron! You sometimes seek to content and comfort yourself in a course of sin and neglect of religion, by the idea that large allowance will be made for the frailty of your nature and the violence of temptation, by Him who remembereth our frame, who knoweth that we are dust, whose mercies endure forever; but I warn you against lowering that high standard of holiness which His law contains, and offending that stainless purity which cannot look upon sin, and insulting that inexorable justice which will by no means clear the guilty, and despising that rich goodness which seeks to bring you to repentance, but failing there will surely bring you to eternal remorse. The blazing glory of infinite holiness is to the sinner a consuming, quenchless fire: the majestic arm of His avenging justice wields a whetted sword that spares not a victim and misses not an aim. If God shall prove to you a hard Master, O sinner, what must be your fate!

But I would address myself at present to a more pleasing and not less profitable task: I would refute your assumption so far as it charges God with undue severity, and vindicate the claims of the gospel as not only allowed, but demanded, by wisdom, righteousness, and love.

One might, at first glance, question whether it is consistent with a becoming modesty and reverence in God's servant to examine the objections of the caviller against the Divine government, and enter upon an argument in vindication of his ways at the bar of human judgment. The august name of the Infinite is ever on the lip of fools to point a jest or strengthen an imprecation; but far be it from his servant to speak or think it without deep abasement and solemn awe. When we would approach, though to adore, a voice speaks forth from the flaming glory, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We enter the holiest with appeasing blood, and the shekinal splendor, though resting on the mercy-seat, dazzles and overpowers us; in silence and in fear we fall and worship. The angels before His throne cover their faces with their wings, as they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts:" reverently restraining within due bounds their desire to look into the mysteries of the gospel, that they may understand the strange sufferings of Christ and

the glory which should follow, they wait their orders, and fly forth as servants to herald salvation and minister to its heirs, though the wondrous plan has not been unrolled to their vision or fathomed by their reason. How shall we, impressed with the sublime majesty and effulgent holiness of the Most High, discuss with foolish, sinful men the wisdom of His law and the equity of His judgments? Yet we are warranted in so doing by inspired examples. Does not God expostulate with men on their folly, refute their objections to His acts, and appeal to their own reason against themselves and in His favor? "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah," we hear Him say, "judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Astounding and affecting spectacle! We see the God of grandeur and of glory, dwelling in the unapproachable splendor of His own uncreated and unbounded perfection, filling with His presence all space and all duration; the faint straggling of whose brightness, through the many-folded veil of clouds which surround Him, is the illumination of heaven, so intense as scarce to be endured by the strength of angelic vision; whose homage and praise, when not awe-struck dumbness as of death, is the thunder-shout of all their hosts, and song deep as the ocean swell; the glance of whose eye is the flash of the lightning, and the step of His foot the tread of the tornado, the breath of His mouth volcanic fire, and the shake of His hand the rocking earthquake; at whose voice of grace in the beginning the universe sprang into being and beauty, at whose voice of terror in the end, it shall dissolve into its primitive abyss of nothing—we see this God stretching forth His hands with crying all day long to a rebellious people; we see Him in Christ, shedding tears for Jerusalem and blood for the world; we see him in his Spirit, striving to win man from ruin; we see him in his servants, warning sinners, pleading with them, stooping to controvert their insulting reasonings; we hear of the sounding of his bowels and of his mercies; we hear him say, "How shall I give thee up? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together;" and again, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do remember him still: there-

fore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." And this God of tender mercy and long suffering you call a hard Master! Be sure that his condescending grace, which is so full of forbearance, unless it shall happily win you to obedience, will break your heart, now hardened against gratitude, with aggravated anguish, and your doom shall be the more terrible because the sentence of the Judge must be sanctioned by the conscience of the criminal. Laying aside, therefore, in accommodation to your folly, that unquestioning loyalty and speechless homage which I would have as the unbroken habit of my own mind, I meet your impious assertions, and maintain that the claims of God in their height and breadth are both right and reasonable.

I. *God does not require of you faith, without ample evidence and light.*

It is not a matter of slight moment what your creed may be. It is of binding obligation and essential importance that you learn and believe the truth as it is in Jesus. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." By faith in the true gospel we must be saved; without it we are lost. It is idle to affirm that a man should not be held responsible for his belief. Suppose that he refuses to seek light, is he not criminal therein? Suppose he blinds his mind, perverts his moral judgment by a long course of sin, or by direct efforts to reason himself into opinions which license and stimulate his lusts, until he loses all perception of the excellence of virtue, and approves the most horrid crimes—is not this sufficient evidence to convict him of guilt and deep depravity, though not an act of wickedness, in accordance with his black creed, be charged against him? Gifted as you are with intelligence and freedom, the necessary conditions of responsibility and moral character, you cannot demand that truth should burst upon your view in full-orbed splendor and irresistible conviction, like the the morning sun upon our globe, without any effort of your own to discover or capacity to dispute it. It is enough, that to the honest, earnest, patient searcher, there should be revealed evidence to satisfy his judgment and light to instruct his reason. "If I had not done among them," said Jesus of the Jews, "the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father." Whenever there has been made an authoritative annunciation of

truth, it has been accompanied by works so far removed from human power, and brought within such distinct cognizance of the senses, as to attest the divinity of the message. These miracles have been witnessed to other lands and times by vast multitudes of spectators, whose general character compels respect, whose sincerity is proved by martyr devotion to their doctrine, and whose concurrence would be more than miraculous if it were not accounted for by the truth of their testimony. I refer not only to those who have recorded the facts, but to the great numbers who, during their lifetime, were appealed to as having observed them, and whose faith and walk from the date of their occurrence were regulated by them: for instance, to the people of Israel who yearly celebrated the feast of the passover in commemoration of that night when the destroying angel spared their homes, but slew the first-born of Egypt; to the five hundred who saw at once the risen Saviour; and to the church at Jerusalem, in whose midst the resurrection was declared to have happened, according to public prophecy, and in spite of an armed guard set to watch his tomb—an event which was the basis of their religion, essentially connected with their whole system of doctrines, and shown forth in their most sacred institutes, indirectly in the sacramental supper, and directly in the holy day of the Lord. If it should still be thought that those before whose eyes those things were wrought, occupy a vantage ground in comparison with us of remoter times to whom they have descended by testimony—though that testimony is no vague tradition, enfeebled in authority by the ages through which it has been transmitted, but is a written record of undoubted authenticity, and published amid the very scenes and days of miracles, and is embodied in the uniform ordinances of the church from her first foundation—there is the cumulative evidence of *prophecy*, a light undimmed by the lapse of centuries; yea, blazing with increasing brilliancy, as history develops event after event of its predictions, like torches that are kindled on earth, or stars that come out in heaven, points of brightness and centres of illumination amid the darkness which covers human destiny, and which will not be fully scattered until the dawn of immortality. On these evidences the wisest have reposed with unshaken confidence; many, like West and Littleton, have examined to refute, but ended in belief; and avowed enemies, distinguished for the perverted might of their minds and the impotent malice of their opposition, have argued, and quibbled, and scoffed, and raged, blind-

ing their eyes to find spots in the sun, and straining their arms to shoot arrows at the sky.

I leave these two great branches of external evidence—granite foundations of the faith, miracles and prophecy—to glance at a more favorite theme with me: the intrinsic force of conviction which belongs to the cardinal doctrines of christianity—doctrines so simple that the untutored African can receive them, so sublime that the loftiest archangel cannot soar up to their height, whose evident reason attests their truth, whose evident grandeur attests their divinity. I affirm boldly that they require no long siege sustained by historical researches and subtle reasonings, but they storm your intellect; yea, rather the heart irresistibly opens to receive them, as the morning glories unfold to receive the sun, and the thirsty herbs rejoice to receive the dews of night. Have they not become the faith of the enlightened world, not held as speculations, to be sifted and weighed, but as established facts and known truths, by which all theories must be tried—the standard and touchstone of truth? I assert that you do believe; I defy you to doubt. The God of the Bible, without cause, date, or place, whose faculties have no limit and whose attributes have no blemish, creator of matter and of spirit, ruler and judge of the universe, sole object of worship—do you not believe in him? The immortality of the soul — dare you question it? Say, if you can, that with the last shut of this eye the light of mind is quenched, and with the rot of this flesh the sensibility of the soul perishes, and with the rigidity of this arm the force of will is struck with fatal paralysis—in the very utterance your own reason will give you the lie, and a sense of self-degradation will be your punishment. Not more surely does the instinct of the eaglet lift him in ambition, ere yet his growing pinions can lift him in attainment, to the empyrean heights, than do the spontaneous longings and conscious capacities of the enlightened spirit bear her towards an immortality from which she is still restrained by physical shackles. I know not whether Divine Omniscience has seen fit to give the crawling caterpillar one intimation of the change that awaits him, of the beauty and the grace which shall adorn his loathsome and cumbrous body, the free air in which he shall sport, and the finer food in which he shall feed; but I do know that in us there dwells the resistless conviction of a temporary disability, keeping us from the sphere for which we were formed, and spiritual tastes and cravings

already begin to foreshow the coming change which shall adapt us to a less sensual and an immortal life. The inborn and universal corruption of human nature—can you look into your own heart without learning it from consciousness, or look around you at babe or man, at individuals or society, without finding proofs beyond number? Nor would I exempt from this scrutiny of reason the grand doctrine of the cross, which is so emphatically the stumbling-block of the skeptic and the ridicule of the scoffer. I affirm that the only possible solution of the confused condition of our race, in whose heart and lot evil and good, justice and mercy, fear and hope, strangely mingle, showing that they are neither acquitted of crime nor abandoned to woe, is the remedial scheme of the gospel—that reign of grace, through the substitution of God's own Son, in human form assumed for the purpose, as the victim of a righteous retribution for our sins, under which an opportunity is afforded the guilty sinner to secure justification from the charges of the broken law; and I further affirm, that the longer and the more deeply one reflects on the difficulties involved in his moral state, and the provision in Christ to meet the exigency of the case, the more filled will he be with admiration and delight at the wisdom, the justice, the mercy of the plan, as a perfect and the only conceivable reconciliation of the stern demands of righteousness with the salvation of the sin-cursed world. In close connection with this redemption by Christ, stands the doctrine of the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost, which is necessary to explain the glimpses of truth, the softenings of a hard heart, and the drawings of a stubborn will towards right and purity, realized by us all; and for a much stronger reason, necessary to recover man from the dominion of sin in his soul, and to invest him with a new, holy nature, as the medium of friendly communion with God, and the fountain of true happiness. Did I not fear to weary you, I would bring before you, also, judgment, heaven, hell. I ask, what say conscience, hope, fear, justice to these things? What say the disorder, the trampled virtue, the unequal lot, of our world? Is there no tribunal before which you must appear—no reckoning that you should dread?

So much on the evidence which demands your faith in the Bible as God's own word. Do you complain that you cannot understand its revelations? Go to the child of seven summers in the Sabbath school; go to the pious old negro at your father's home, and ask them to explain it. Those things are hid from none except those foolishly wise

in their own conceit, or wilfully resolved to exclude the light, or wickedly careless about instruction; they are revealed unto babes. Search the scriptures with an honest heart, in order to find out, and embrace, and live by the truth—it will disclose itself in a brighter effulgence, and a richer beauty, and a more convincing evidence, as you proceed, by giving new discernment to your spiritual understanding, and new activity to your spiritual tastes. Do you object that there are so many mysteries into which you cannot pierce? And what are you, born of yesterday, and to-morrow doomed to die, that you should understand all mysteries? I cannot tell whether I should fall to laughing or to crying, as some young man who has just learned to distinguish his right hand from his left, whose eye is beginning to open to what exists and operates around him, but not to its essence, end, or cause, who scarce knows how to steady his steps, and does not know whither to direct them—as such an one comes to me complaining that he went forth to explore immensity, and got lost; that he searched after the bounds of eternity, and was only bewildered for his pains; that he attempted to dive down into the deepest problems of divine wisdom, and could not touch bottom; that he aimed to comprehend the Infinite, and his inflated mind still stretched not to sufficient capacity for the vast idea; that to him this wide universe seems sadly out of sorts, its affairs involved beyond possibility of disentanglement, and conducted without intelligible plan! But you reply, perhaps, that this sarcasm cannot satisfy you: you admit that in the counsels of Jehovah there must be many things which he has not chosen to explain, or you have not capacity to comprehend; but doctrines, you say, are taught by christian churches which are clearly and irreconcilably opposed to the most elementary and universal principles of righteousness, and which your reason compels you to reject. Well, let us look at this matter. Select, for instance, the Calvinistic creed. What is the difficulty? God is just, man responsible, sin avoidable, virtue voluntary, by the undoubted testimony of the Bible, as well as of reason; none but fools and wretches dispute these truths. Our Calvinistic brethren affirm them as strongly as ourselves. The question in controversy between them and us is not whether these be so, but whether their scheme of predestination is consistent with them; if it be, your objection is obviated; if not, by unanimous consent it is false. Your accountability and God's justice are solid rock; theories of the human will and divine

decrees are fluctuating waters which may break against, but cannot shake it.

I reach this conclusion: God's truth is sanctioned by man's reason.

II. *God has published a law which you know to be just and good.*

You cannot complain against this law, because it requires of you only that holiness which your reason recognizes as the highest excellence, that rectitude which your conscience recognizes as of the highest obligation. To omit one of its traits from your character would mar its beauty; to omit one of its precepts from your duty would license sin. I have spoken of christianity as a system of doctrines, and we have seen it to contain unmixed and lofty truth; I speak of it now as a system of morals, and pronounce it the perfect law. No other creed will bear comparison with the christian's faith; neither will any other code with the christian's law. I declare it, with a painful consciousness of my own unworthiness, which is more than lip deep, and costs me more heavily than mere word confession, that however this law may condemn and abase me, I would not lower it by one line from the height of its commands, or subtract one tittle from their breadth—no, not for the universe. Let me be pronounced guilty, but that justice remain unwarped; let me be shown vile, but that purity remain unstained. I will stand afar off, and smite my breast, and cry unclean: but shut not from my sight that beauty which I love, that majesty which I adore, with a devotion surpassing my weak fondness for all my treasure, and all my joy beside—the ravishing beauty, the sublime majesty of the holy law. There may be particular precepts of a positive nature, the design and benefit of which are not obvious to our minds: though these are few, if any, in the new and simple covenant under which we live. But for the most part, its institutions carry with them the evidence of their own wisdom and benevolence; and without an exception, its principles must be acknowledged by friend and foe, believer and infidel, so perfect that no flaw can be detected, so complete that no addition can be suggested, so authoritative that none can dispute their obligation. It realizes the perfect ideal of goodness; and yet it is no mere abstraction, but a light to guide us, and a rule to try us in all the situations and particulars of life, in act and spirit, in motive and method, ascending to the height of supreme love to God, and yet coming down without the compromise of its dignity to the humblest virtues, such as prudence and sobriety. Have you ever

thought of it, that this law cannot be set aside without renouncing your conscience and reason? That it harmonizes with, and is the embodiment of all those grand principles of justice and goodness by which you, by which the civilized world, test character and conduct? That man must become hopelessly blind, irrecoverably lost, the very recognition of virtue and all her charms gone, before he can deny this law to be holy, and just, and good? That whatever you may say about the book, you could as soon sully a sunbeam as connect impurity with the law that book contains; you could no more doubt its divinity than that God built the sky? Let these statutes be graven on stone, or written in a book, or published by voice, or in any other way brought before the mind, conscience shall approve them, and they shall carry with them all the authority of God, and the transgressor shall be self-reproached and tremble through fear of righteous retribution, and reason shall pronounce that only by conformity to them, whether they be the essential principles of right which must enter into the law of every order of intelligent beings, or the applications of these principles to the special relations of man, can the character be purified and ennobled, inward peace secured, government sustained, and the interests of society promoted. It would be more rational to expect physical strength and enjoyment where every organ was diseased, and every function deranged, than spiritual happiness in a heart whose dispositions and acts vary from this rule of moral health and order.

If I had space, I would not shrink from the task of subjecting this position to the severest investigation. I would call up, one by one, those virtues which have direct relation to God, supreme love, resignation, patience, gratitude, reverence, faith, obedience; then those which rather rest in ourselves, temperance, chastity, modesty, humility; then those which respect our fellow-men, truth, honesty, meekness, charity: I would ask which one is wrong, unworthy, unnecessary; which one could you blot out; which one lacks the impress of truth and divinity; which one lacks majesty and grace. I would defy you to add to the list, to take from the list, to amend or abate. The sun is not so bright: heaven's dome is not so broad, and high, and regular; there reigns not amid the systems and motions of the stars a harmony so complete, as is this perfection of all that is beautiful, and lovely, and proportioned, and noble, and sublime, most worthy

to be revered and loved as the image of God's own wisdom and will, most worthy to be embraced and practiced as man's true dignity and good. I will select one command; it shall be the most difficult to be obeyed—that from which our fallen nature recoils with the most stubborn hostility, that which is directly in the teeth of the old philosophy and of the world's code of honor—the duty of forgiveness, of love and kindness to our enemies. I ask a fair trial at the bar of your own reason. I appreciate the disadvantage under which I labor; the passions of your heart are against this precept: your own life is condemned by it, and to sanction it is heavily to accuse yourself; it is sneered at and scouted by the great world. Nevertheless, I appeal to you in the quiet hour when prejudice and passion are in a measure stilled, and am willing that your understanding, sadly darkened as it is in spiritual things—your conscience, sadly stupefied as it has become by neglect of religion, shall decide the question. It is weak and unmanly not to revenge insult and injury, is the heathen doctrine; it is noble, godlike, is the christian. I place before you a man of scrupulous honesty, of unblemished purity, of generous friendship. He has been deeply injured, wantonly insulted, in his person, property, reputation, family, by one whom he had treated with uniform kindness. Now every other feeling is swallowed up in the foaming passion of revenge; he plans, he pursues that he may inflict terrific punishment; he loathes, scorns, hates, with cruel hatred, his enemy; he would waste his possessions, lacerate his tenderest affections, rend him limb from limb. There stands before you the hero of heathen admiration—of human philosophy. And now I present to you another who shall resemble the former in every other feature, but differ in the triumph of holy love. He shall not lack courage; christianity disdains cowardice. He shall not be of so easy and sluggish a spirit that he would not stir to maintain his rights; christianity gives hardihood and earnestness. He shall not be protected from the pain of that wound which the hand of his familiar friend has given by an obtuse nature—his shall be keen sensibility; for christianity refines, instead of blunting the feelings. He shall have a warm indignation against all injustice and meanness; and pity shall not enfeeble principle, but he shall be prompt to strike the blow of judgment at the demand of duty. And yet, he shall spare his foe, shall forgive from the heart his foe, shall feel sorrow for his crime, shall pray for his amendment and pardon, shall retrench his own expenses that he may

minister to his wants, and risk the most imminent
Such is the hero of christianity. What say you?
Who is right? Answer: "The hero of heath
you to Calvary, and dare you despise the cry of
forgive them." I carry you to the great white th
invoke justice without mercy, wrath without forgiveness.

You cannot find fault with God's law if you would.

III. *God offers you justification on terms which are simple, just, and eminently merciful.*

It argues gross presumption and folly in the criminal to except to any method by which he may be acquitted; for his acquittal must proceed from mere grace, and deserve the warmest gratitude. How a sinner can be cleared in the Divine court where his crime is proved, where the law pronounces every one accursed who continueth not in all things therein written, where a justice presides which metes out due retribution without the chance of mistake or partiality—how he can go forth at freedom and in honor as a righteous person, and resume his rank among heaven's loyal subjects, is a problem so difficult that it must have been judged insoluble by the highest finite intelligence before the revelation of the gospel. "*He justifieth the ungodly:*" there is the good news of a mercy in God and a happiness for man which were incredible on any less assurance than the Divine proclamation, but being found true should melt the heart of stone, and fill with more than angelic rapture earth's despairing wretches; it does raise in the presence of God a shout of joy which had never sounded forth over the safety of the unfallen. And while the great heart of God is yearning with compassion towards the guilty, and the eternal Son is looking with delight to see the travail of his soul, and all the bright spirits around the throne are praising the love that abounded over sin, and rejoicing with new songs in sympathy with the ransomed captives of earth, shall the transgressor proudly lift the head which had deserved to bow in perpetual degradation beneath the wrath of his Judge, and quarrel with the conditions on which his pardon is offered, and fling back, as into the very face of God, that writ of justification! But if you be so disposed, what complaint can you allege against the conditions? Comment would be superfluous to show that God is right in demanding confession and renunciation of sin, and acceptance of forgiveness as his free gift. Do you object

to the shame and bitterness of repentance? Surely, the pain of a penitence which is comforted amid its very tears by assurances of the divine readiness to forgive, is an easy exchange for the blackness of despair and the gnawings of remorse and the endurance of vengeance through ages without end; and the cries of a suppliant at the mercy-seat, where God's own Son is the advocate, are far better than prayers in hell, to which comes through eternity no answer save laughter and mockery, and wailings over a ruin from which there is no recovery. God takes no pleasure in your sorrow except as it is necessary to your amendment, but he hastes to bind up the bruised heart and pour into it a healing balm. The gospel contains no weak compromise by which a partial suffering of the penalty is substituted for its eternal and unmitigated severity; it teaches neither penance during life nor purgatory hereafter. Evangelical repentance is neither in whole nor in part an atonement for sin; and the grief it implies has no other use and no further extent, either in time or poignancy, than to induce the hating and abandonment of sin, and an earnest turning unto God. When that point has been reached, there soon follows a sweet peace through the witness of a full pardon.

But the great, the peculiar condition on which justification is offered, is faith in Christ. And what possible objection can be urged against this, unless it be such an one as Naaman presented when he was told to dip himself seven times in Jordan for the cure of his leprosy—viz: that he had expected a more difficult task and a more magnificent apparatus? Men wonder and stumble at the doctrine of salvation by faith, because to believe seems so small a thing. It demands neither toil nor suffering, neither ceremony nor waiting, neither learning nor morality: it is as easy and instantaneous as looking to the brazen serpent on the pole, or touching the hem of Christ's robe; its efficacy is no more restricted by the previous character and life than was the virtue which went forth from Jesus by the nature or extent of the disease. Faith is the denial of all merit, righteousness and works in the believer. It flings away the worthless dross of our own deeds, with which we had vainly dreamed to purchase heaven, and bows before God a beggar and a debtor: it silences the tongue which had been flippant with self-excuse and self-praise, and is dumb at the Divine reproof: it tears off every bandage from our wounds, and probes them through the skin which had deceitfully closed over them to their very depth, exposing the festered, loathsome corrup-

tion: it goeth not about to establish our own righteousness, but stands still with self-despair. Such is faith simply doing nothing, ceasing to work, ceasing to go about, ceasing to boast, naked, speechless, wounded, dying. But what else shall I say of faith? *It looks, it listens, it receives.* With reverent boldness it draws nearer to Jesus in Gethsemane than the stone's cast which separated his favored disciples, and with anxious vigilance sleeps not one moment of those dark hours which he spends in prostrate prayer, but hearkens to every cry of anguish which breaks the silence of the night, and watches every drop of sweat which falls like blood to the earth; for well does it understand that the cup of bitterness so intense as to sicken unto death the soul of the shrinking, yet submissive sufferer, must be drunk to the dregs, or else to the sinner's lips shall be pressed forever the exhaustless potion of God's wrath, without one drop of water to allay its burning heat. It follows Jesus, but not afar off as did Peter, to the high priest's palace, and Pilate's judgment-seat; it witnesses all the mockery and all the pain which he endures from Jewish council, Roman governor, rude soldiers, and excited rabble; it lingers with his mother and the beloved disciple near his cross, until he cries, "It is finished," and yields the ghost: it beholds another victim than the mere man for whose blood the crowd thirsted, and another judge than unjust Pilate, who gave up to death one he had himself pronounced faultless, and another charge than that of treason against Cæsar for which he is condemned—the Son of God, adjudged by the Father who delighted in him to an anguish exceeding human appreciation, in expiation of the united sins of the whole world. It is earlier at the sepulchre on the third morning than Mary Magdalene with her needless spices, and freely weeps, but not like her, with grief; for it is in time to see the first triumph of the Redeemer over death—God's witness to the love with which he accepts the satisfaction offered his offended justice in the voluntary sacrifice of his Son, and God's pledge to save through its merit every believing sinner. It is at Bethany on the day of the ascension, but the cloud in which Jesus is folded hides him not from its more piercing gaze, as it did from the eleven; for it sees the grand triumphal procession of heaven's hosts hasting forth through the everlasting doors to hail the King of glory, and the crown of universal empire, outshining the sun, with which the Father binds upon the throne the brow so lately torn by thorns upon the cross. It abides in that most holy presence

of God, where blazes a splendor beyond the shekinah, and a mercy-seat of purer gold than the lid of the ark is sprinkled with more precious blood than ever flowed beneath the knife of Levitical priest; it hears our great High Priest, with infinite majesty, with boundless compassion, pleading for our sakes the value of his own vicarious suffering and death. And through this wonderful plan of mediation, it receives, it is gifted with blessings beyond all price, save that of the blood of God's own Son. Jesus Christ is made unto us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. A righteousness not of the law, but of grace, is found, whose surpassing excellence causes us to count all things else but loss. The debtor is discharged from his obligation; the beggar is enriched with treasures beyond computation; the sick unto death is restored to soundness by a kind physician; the criminal is absolved from guilt; the dead is alive, and the lost is found.

Oh sinner! here is a burden, but it presses not on you. Here is the exaction of your debt unto the last farthing, but it is paid by another. Here is rigor, the unsparing rigor of law and justice, but God's beloved Son is held to the account, and feels the keen edge of the sword. For him there is severity, for you there is grace alone. Over his sufferings the sun blackens, and the earth quakes; but towards you is displayed

> "Amazing pity, grace unknown,
> And love beyond degree!"

IV. *God has made a gracious provision for the renewal of your fallen nature after his own image in holiness.*

Man, in the pride of his heart, would gladly think well of himself if he could. And such is the blindness which sin brings over his moral judgment, and such are the delusions which he practices upon himself to conceal an unpleasant truth, that he has but a faint conception of his own depravity, and sometimes feels a positive complacency in his own character. Yet he meets with but a partial success in his earnest effort to hide from himself the true state of his heart, and to persuade himself that he is not a degraded being. There is too much of vice, and crime, and selfishness, and impiety in the world not to be discovered and condemned even by his obscure vision and obtuse conscience. He himself has been guilty of departures from duty too evident to be denied, and there often burn in his

heart tempers of such violence as not to be overlooked, and of such fiendishness or brutality as not to be excused. He would shrink with abject shame from the disclosure to his fellows of thoughts and principles and motives which work within his secret soul; he cannot be reconciled with himself, but is mortified and pained at his own weakness in yielding to temptation, and his own lusts which crave unhallowed indulgence; he would shrink with terror at the idea of appearing before the judgment seat of God, and being revealed in all his pollution amid the effulgence of the divine perfections. Loud as are the laudations of man with which the world often rings, the sober confession is as often extorted that human nature is very frail, full of faults and infirmities, easily led astray by temptation, breaking loose with untamable wildness from every restraint of law and education, but soon subjected to the resistless tyranny of evil habits. I appeal to your observation of mankind, to your familiarity with history, to the facts of your own life, to the present testimony of your own consciousness, in proof that the heart is habitually and deeply vicious. If you are ever well pleased with yourself, it is in gay moods of thoughtlessness, or on very superficial reflection; it is when friends have flattered you, or you have drugged your own souls with the opiate of vain imaginations. I challenge you to enter on serious self-examination; to select as a standard of comparison an ideal of virtue and purity, not more strict and spiritual than your own conscience will approve as right and enforce as binding, if you allow conscience to speak; to try your life by that line—your inward dispositions by that law, candidly and searchingly, as you expect to be tried by God in the day of accounts. I know that the verdict of your own heart now will be the same as the verdict of the dread Judge then—you will pronounce yourself unworthy of his love and unfit for heaven. It requires no peculiar skill of priest, or seven days of trial, to determine that you are a moral leper, cut off from the congregation of the righteous and the presence of divine glory. Yet you know not one tithe of your own wickedness as it appears before the God of infinite purity, or even as it may be learned by yourself. You confess in moments of honesty and sober thought that you are prone to do evil and weak to do good; but in fact, you are a captive to sin, without power to escape its chains, and a spiritual paralytic, impotent to work righteousness. You may patch together a garment of fancied goodness by outward morality and religious

forms, but you have only to consider in order to strip off and cast away the robe of filthy rags as utterly worthless. Set about to change your nature, and be the holy being your conscience commends, and you will find the task as difficult as to roll back the river rushing to the sea.

But I pause too long in describing the disease—where is the remedy? Can there be any remedy? One only, and that must come from the power and grace of God. He cannot change. Over his lustrous purity shall never come spot or dimness. As his essence, so must be his will and law, holy, unchangeable. Not a precept can be waived in accommodation to human weakness. Earth, his footstool, heaven, his throne, may be crushed and rolled into nonenity; but his glory, which is his holiness, shall still shine forth in infinite brightness, and his law, which is a flawless mirror reflecting that glory, shall remain in its original perfection. God must ever loathe and hate sin, with a repugnance as uncompromising as his justice and as unbounded as his purity. But man may change—rather, may be changed, for the change cannot come from himself. How shall this change be wrought? Not by the law, though it is holy, just, and good. Absolutely perfect in its own nature and to its own end, it has no adequacy or even tendency to restore to purity a sinful nature. It is an infallible guide in the path of life, but not a physician to cure an impotent man that he may walk therein. Its study may increase the admiration of virtue in the pure, because it discloses all her peerless beauty; but a carnal mind feels a more violent aversion to its statutes the more clearly they are understood. You must be born again—born of God—or you cannot see his kingdom. There is regenerating power in the Holy Ghost shed down on us by the Father. The old heart must be taken away, and a new heart given. The nature itself must be thoroughly renovated before it can take any delight in God, or God can take any delight in it. Nothing will answer the necessities of your case save a spiritual and almighty influence, which can act directly on the very heart and revolutionize the whole man. Such is the work of the Spirit. The very best account of your moral state which even your dim-eyed conscience can furnish, shows the need of a change to make you a partaker of the divine nature, so vast and profound as to be beyond any other agency than that of God's Spirit; and the very worst account of yourself which you can give under the progress of religious conviction, cannot show

too desperate a condition to be saved by this power to which all things are possible. Though you be dead in sin, the Spirit can quicken you; though you be buried, the Spirit can raise you from your grave; though you have turned to corruption, the Spirit can restore to order the elements which have dissolved, and reclothe with beauty the form which has decayed; though your skeleton be broken and your bones be dry, and the question be asked with despair, "Can these dry bones live?" yet there may breathe upon you the Spirit, so that the deranged fragments shall be composed into a new man, and your heart shall beat with the pulsations of an immortal life.

This Spirit of the Lord has sufficiently enlightened your mind, and excited a susceptibility to the attractions of holiness, to induce in you a penitent seeking after God, unless you wilfully resist his gracious drawings. If you ask his sanctifying work, your Father in heaven will give him to your prayers with greater eagerness than ever earthly parent gave bread to the cries of a starving child. He will dwell in you to thoroughly purify your inmost thoughts, and to strengthen you for all righteousness. Through his might you shall, like Paul, be able to do all things: that strength is made perfect in weakness. There is not a command in the Bible so high that you shall not find a promise of grace sufficient to qualify you for its performance. If you are required to love the Lord your God with all your heart, he has promised to circumcise your heart that you may love him with all the heart. You are left in a world of evil, but Christ prays the Father to keep you from the evil. You will be exposed to temptations, but there shall not befal you a tempation without strength enough being imparted to bear it. He "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

V. *God pays the largest wages for the service he demands.*

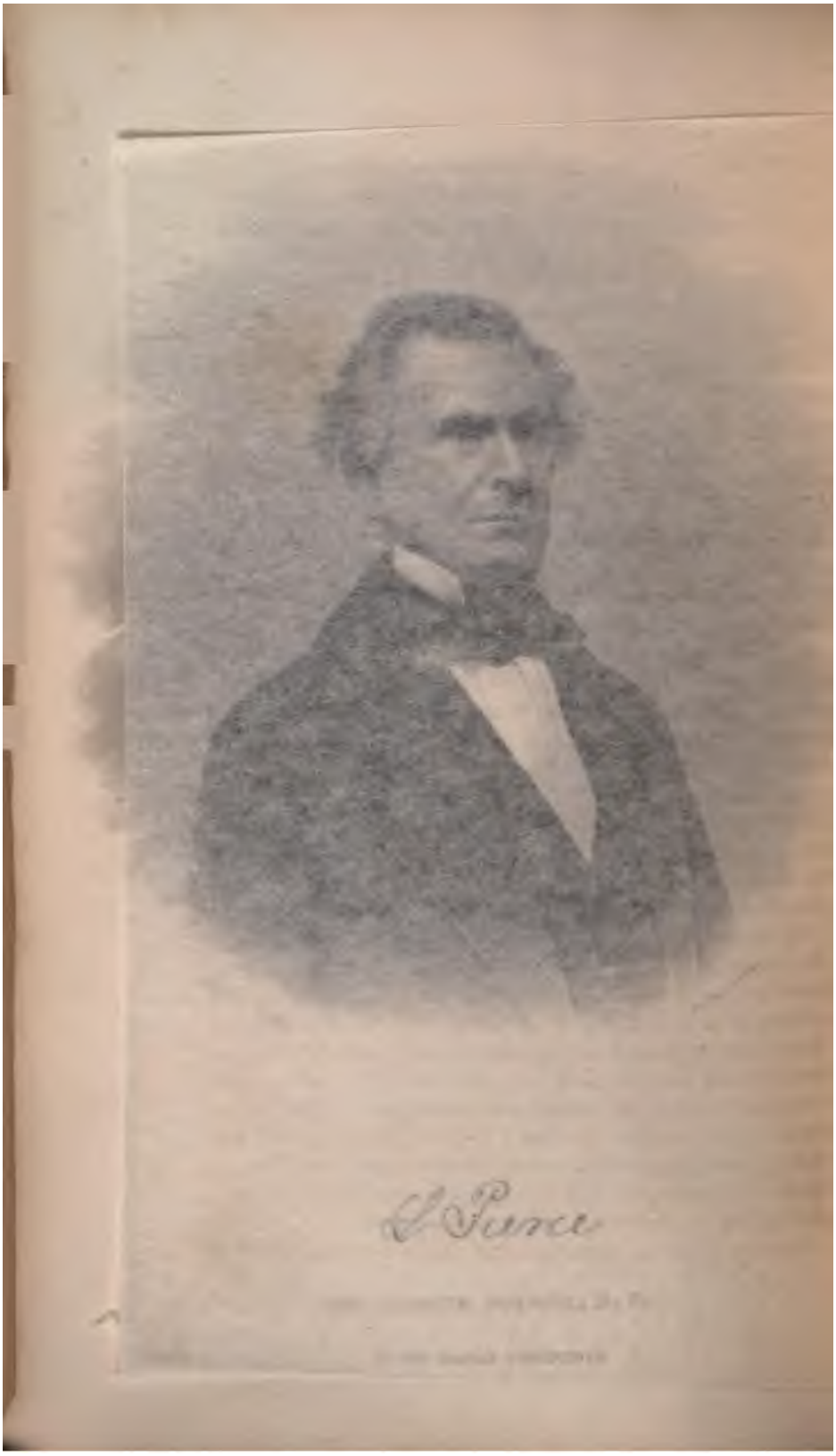
The remuneration is of grace, not of debt, for the most faithful service through a life-time would only fill the measure of duty, and could not bring our Lord under obligation. Man, in his impatience, desires immediate reward; and God, in his compassion, does not withhold it until the day's task is finished, but begins to bless him in his very deed, and reserves for him in heaven an incorruptible inheritance. The recompense in this world is a hundred fold greater than the toil and the sacrifice; there is added in the world

to come everlasting life—a portion too vast to bear any ratio which we can express or conceive to the service even of the apostle who was "in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." God keeps ceaseless watch over his servants, directs, defends, feeds, clothes them. He gives them his Spirit to abide in their hearts as a comforter. This divine friend, guest, companion, speaks to them, communes with them, leads them into a spiritual understanding of the precious truths of God, inspires them with child-like confidence and delight in their heavenly Father, encourages them under difficulties and despondency, and strengthens them with internal joy and vigor when they feel ready to faint and fall. The kind voice of the Spirit cheers them in the heat of the strife and during the dull hours of watching; and there soon follows a complete victory which revives and emboldens them for fresh conflicts. They have peace of conscience, the love of God, and fruits of usefulness. Theirs is a steadily increasing reward, because they are conscious of a progressive purification and strengthening of their spirits, by which it becomes easier to conquer temptation, a keener relish is felt for divine things, and they have larger capacity to do good. In seasons of affliction, they have revelations of God in such glory of holiness and tenderness of love as they enjoy at no other time; and they come forth from the fires with a purity, not tarnished, but more resplendent than before. Their dying hours are bright with a spiritual joy and triumph which draw from the most worldly the prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

After a short life of labor they rest forever, and their works do follow them. Shall I attempt to describe the munificence of that recompense which God will give to you when you shall have proved faithful unto death? Shall I contrast the wages of sin with the wages of piety—eternal death with eternal life? Shall I speak of the short service and the enduring reward? Shall I speak of how little we do and how much we receive? I can find neither words nor thoughts worthy of the theme. The inspired description leaves nothing to be desired above or besides what is promised. You could not ask more than you will get; you cannot even conceive the riches of your inheritance. You shall sit down to a heavenly feast, and the Son of God shall gird himself to serve you. Because you have employed, not for your own pleasure, but for the glory of God and the good of

others, the few talents here committed to your trust, you shall be ruler over many things, and it shall be the will of God that they should minister to your full enjoyment. There is nothing which seems to us so long or so heavy as affliction; but the most severe and protracted sufferings are light as a feather and brief as a moment if compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which they work out for the christian. Your talents may be few and your sphere of activity contracted, but if you improve that which is given, you shall not fail to be commended as a good and faithful servant, and to be welcomed into the joy of your Lord. Your face shall glow like the sun in his strength, while around your form shall flow a robe of light, and on your brow shall glitter a crown of glory. Your rank shall be equal to that of the angels, and God himself shall delight to honor you; yea, Jesus Christ shall seat you by his side as a brother, and share his inheritance with you as a joint-heir. There will not be a tongue to revile you, or a hand to be raised against you, or a tempter to try you, or a sorrow to pierce you, or a care to annoy you, or a task to weary you. Every desire will feast without satiety on a full supply, and every faculty will exult without fatigue in the noblest employment. Yours shall be an endless life of waiting on God, beholding his glory, hearing his voice, doing his will, delighting in his love, being transformed into his image, with a satisfaction and rapture unmixed in purity and unbounded in degree.

Friend, will you withhold from God so reasonable a service, and reject for yourself so rich a reward?



PAUL'S COMMISSION TO PREACH.

BY LOVICK PIERCE, D. D.,

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"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."—I Cor. i, 17.

As all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, we may place our text at once upon its proper basis, and proceed to adjust its terms and explain its rather singular aspect, according to our view of its import.

And, *first*: Were it meet to call any one of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ an appointee of his by eminence, we think all would unite on Paul. His epistles are nearly all prefaced with the same great governing fact—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ"—once adding "Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." And he once says he was "set for the defence of the gospel." Putting all these evidences of his divine credentials together, and then seeing how slightly attached to the commission of preaching was the work of baptizing, there is much room left for wise suggestions, none for silly speculation.

The commission of St. Paul to preach the gospel was either a perfect commission, without an absolute order to baptize; or else he preached under an imperfect commission, and pleads its origin and authority to be divine. Every one not mentally disabled to judge by an incautious surrender of principle to creed, will admit the first member of the proposition—to wit: that St. Paul had a perfect commission to preach the gospel, exclusive of an absolute order to baptize. And if this be ceded as a fact, it calls us all, with due distrust of many long-settled notions about baptism, to review old theories and conclusions, and see whether we may not in some way be "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

One thing we assume as certain—viz: that if there may be issued

a perfect commission to preach the gospel without an absolute order to baptize, then baptism as a thing or act is not an integrant portion of what the scriptures mean by the charming epithet, *gospel*. For if it were, then would a commission to preach shut up every preacher of the gospel to the necessity of baptizing as a part of his office, and of preaching baptism as a part of the gospel. This will furnish the reason why so many self-deluded preachers preach baptism so much; it is because they look upon baptism (by which they mean immersion) as a portion of the gospel—not as an incidental appendage of a Christian church, but as a part of the very gospel. If they did not so understand it, they could not preach immersion as one of Christ's commands under the general commission, "Go, preach my gospel." And yet there are thousands of worthy preachers who preach this dogma as a portion of Christ's gospel. As a proof point-blank that they do so understand it, they deny the existence of a gospel church in the absence of immersion, and hold that a pure and legitimate administrator must derive his right from his place in a regular descending line of the duly immersed. They also make obedience to this feature in the gospel they preach indispensable to Christian communion. In a word, immersionists demand more and yield less at this point than anywhere else. A candidate may be a liberal on almost any point of general faith, but on the question of immersion, as demanded by eminence, no modification can be allowed. All must yield to one mode, and then hold every one not immersed as a stranger and a foreigner in the family of Christ.

That anything as subordinate to the gospel as baptizing is made in Paul's commission to preach, as set forth in the text, should have been exalted by men to such importance, is a point entitled to manly and fearless consideration. For let it be understood that the obligation of a minister to perform baptism cannot fall below the value of baptism itself; and if the necessity to be baptized is to be enforced on the same ground that we enforce the obligation to believe, then there could not be any such subordination of baptism as that which is provided for in St. Paul's commission. But if baptism, like circumcision, is a mere certificate of interests secured to the holder anterior to its institution—obtained without and entirely independent of it, it being only a sign or seal of an interest arising from a simple reliance on the covenant of grace, through Christ Jesus—then Paul's failure to baptize was no infraction of any primary law or ground of saving

faith. Thus to ignore baptizing was not to discard baptism as wrong or idle, but to declare its great inferiority when compared with preaching the gospel—it being at best only an outward rite, valuable as a testimonial of an inward grace, but perfectly worthless in itself. And if such a deduction is at all legitimate, it follows as a matter of course that the individual right of Christians to communion in the household of faith does not proceed in anywise from baptism, in view of original dependence of the one upon the other, but from the possession and exercise of that faith which justifies the ungodly, into the groundwork and reason of which baptism did not and cannot enter. The whole value of Christian baptism is found in its representative and social signification. In the first, it is the visible sign of imparted purity; in the second, it is the fraternal sign of the household of faith, and of the consociation of converted souls in the Church of the living God, and derives its importance and authority from the divine law and rule of order. It is to be regarded as the initiatory step into Church relationship: in taking which, the initiated is understood to admit all the rights of the Church, and to pledge himself to a Christian observance of all the rules and regulations thereof. Hence it is conceded as a self-evident fact, that any denominational law or usage in the establishment of an exclusive mode of baptism, cannot have any force beyond their own limits as a reasonable ground of brotherly fellowship, until they prove that a legitimate membership in the Church of Christ cannot be secured without a special mode of baptism, and that all variations or modifications of that mode renders nugatory, and an usurpation, the claim of any person for brotherly communion and Christian fellowship—the claimant not being in the Church. Our conclusion is, that every such assumption of right and power in a Church is but a beguiling of Christ's children in a voluntary humility, a subjection of them to an usurped authority, and a policy of bigotry at war with Paul's directions, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink," or in anything immaterial to the faith that justifies and saves. Every such surrender of a great principle is the inauguration of an element of arrant bigotry.

But the commission of St. Paul suggests another important idea, viz: that the office of baptizing may, by an over estimate of its necessity, minister to divisions in the Church, and that as an inferior office it may and should be laid over until this evil is cured. We assume this apostolic example as convincing proof that baptism can

never have importance enough to justify divisions in the Church; and therefore all such divisions founded on mere differences about baptism are evidences of bigotry on a larger scale than they are of orthodoxy. It is true that Paul ignored baptism for reasons stronger than could easily be shown in our day; but it is sufficient for our purpose, in all cases where the evil is presumptively evident. Paul's movement in this instance is not alleged on higher ground. He only feared, as a possible case, that some one of the self-styled Paulites might, in partizan heat and folly, claim to be baptized in the name of Paul. But let not any imagine that Paul feared the formula of baptism would be altered, so that the officiating minister would say "I baptize thee in the name of Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ." No, this was not what he feared, and what he so nobly deprecated. He feared that he would seem to be making disciples unto himself: this was what he meant by baptizing in his own name. There was the carnal leaven of envy and strife working lustily in Corinth. It was a choice time and place for a factionist. The revival, or to speak more properly perhaps, the great religious awakening in Corinth came up under Paul's preaching; so much so that he afterwards, in vindication of his ministerial success there against his calumniators, asserts his pre-emption right to the whole of them, as his converts. But waiving all advantages from position and priority, he nobly lived and labored only for Christ. He was one of a very few preachers, as I fear, who know that there cannot be an over-appreciation of themselves but at the deadly cost of an equal depreciation of Christ. He knew that the leaven of Paulism in the Church would be no less harmful than would the leaven of Herod. He counted a refusal to baptize his converts a saving policy demanded by Christ himself, when set up against the error and idolatry of man-worship which enters into all these excessive admirations of men. In how many ways, and in how many instances, think you, baptisms are virtually administered in the name of a Paul? I tell you I am not utterly mistaken, nor do I speak uncharitably, when I say there are now in our midst preachers who would rejoice more at the conversion of any old or prominent member in another church to the belief that immersion is the only mode of baptism, indeed that it is the thing itself, than they would at the conversion of a sinner who had this sectarian faith before. Now, candor and conscience compel me to say, that I want no other proof of the carnal origin of any ecclesiasticism of this kind

than these two—the bigotry that disowns, and the zeal that proselytes with a gusto. And these little carnal outgushings can be found in no church, unless some strict orthodoxy of creed or punctilious observance of order, not recognized by other churches as of such intrinsic value, is raised to preëminent importance, and becomes a matter of glorying. There are thousands of these misguided immersionists who have imbued their spirits with admiration of this bantling idea, until they really believe themselves the chosen sentinels of the ark of the covenant. Thus every one who defends an idea under the belief that he is defending a divinity, naturally becomes a sort of spiritual idolator.

It is evident that Paul was too cautious in his course, or else many of his successors are far too incautious; either he was over scrupulous in guarding the great doctrine of grace, of exclusive grace in human salvation, or else we are generally too indifferent about the dangers of its corruption. I fear there is too much glorying in men and modes, for the purity of the church. It is no better to make a sectarian now than it would have been in Paul to make a partizan. He determined to do neither by any official act of his; and therefore after baptizing Crispus and Gaius, and subsequently Stephanas and his household, he practically ignored baptism, lest any should say he baptized in his own name—that is, baptized his converts as his own disciples, and the friends of his party. Against such a chance, he said that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not to raise up a Paul party, by going on to baptize, while some said "I am of Paul," and of course would wish to be baptized by Paul as their champion leader. No, he ceases to baptize any of them, knowing that if they thought baptism was any better at his hands, because he was their man, than it would be at the hands of any other minister, they were not religiously worth baptizing. And if they were baptized as much to honor Paul, as to be honored by him, they were to all practical ends baptized in the name of Paul Here was a preacher for you—a model preacher. Where shall we find his successors? Can no such man be found in our times? Can we find anywhere now a warm-hearted immersionist who, when about to immerse an uninformed subject, would say: "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel; that is, baptism is so little a thing that I do not look upon it as contained in the spirit of my commission; it is only added as a thing of practical utility to the outward church; and if I

thought you would look upon yourself as any more acceptable to Christ, any more worthy or welcome a member in his church, on account of this immersion, I would now desist." Baptism, like circumcision, is nothing—nothing in the same sense. Who ever heard any immersionists labor to convince his subjects that immersion, as a spiritual agency, was empty, dead, worthless in itself—that it was a mere religious form, and could not, by its mode, make religion more valid? Now, brother, it were as well for you to make water itself your saviour, as the mode of applying it in baptism. Now we modestly say that if our immersionists would talk thus to their numerous disciples, (and it is their absolute duty to talk so to them) there would be a decline in the estimated value of immersion. But right here arises the dificulty which presses so fearfully upon all sides of this question. The practical working in these days of all sectarian and partisan movements, is exactly the opposite of Paul's course. We risk wrong notions about certain things—for instance, immersion itself—rather than depress them to their proper measure, for fear of unsettling some views already extravagant in devotion to this mode. Paul's idea was that non-baptism was a less evil to the Corinthian church, than baptism with idolatrous elements wrapped up in it; our modern immersionists recommend and defend their idolized mode of baptism, as if satisfied that an error in mode is more to be dreaded than an excess of confidence in its God-pleasing letter. Hence an ultra immersionist never thinks too much passed to the credit of immersion, until you say it is meritorious enough to supersede Christ's merit! then alarmed and horrified, he raises his wail. So that you do not reach that point, you may say: "There is no gospel-obedience without it; no church without it; no ground of christian communion without it. It is Christ's chosen and only mode of baptism. Christ has the same views of immersion and preference for it that we have. And I believe that God is just as much pleased with me on account of my having followed him through his 'liquid grave,' as I am with myself." Every immersionist that does not feel and think thus enough to justify him in saying so, ought to be ashamed of his adhesion to his party. For if all this is not true, the whole ground of modal baptism is only a delusive mirage. But the delight with which every water-worshiping spirit hears the immersionist extol and magnify the mode of his baptism, is proof conclusive of his devotion to mode. The credentials

under which he acts must, therefore, differ from those Christ gave to Paul, in so far as to make baptism a part of the gospel, and its administration a paramount duty. Hence a stress and meaning are placed on every phase of this wonderful symbol, so as to magnify a mode.

But once more we will return to our stand-point: The division of the church in connection with baptizing. Have not these latter days furnished men of popular ministerial prominence who have rent in twain a church of years, and of well-earned fame, on the ground of baptism? Not indeed about its mode, but about sequences involved in the extravagant notions entertained concerning the mere mode. The church as it was, made immersion indispensable to gospel obedience. The great reformer desired the church to go farther, and increase the necessity for this obedience, by making immersion, when believingly received, the guarantee of regeneration—thus seemingly denying the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and yet teaching that the Spirit is so resident in the word, or letter, as to render obedience to the letter indispensable to the offices of the Spirit, and those offices a never failing certainty upon such obedience. It was a magnificent idea for such as labored under the modal lunacy. It is a matter of wonder to me, how Mr. Campbell came to make immersion such a central point in this brief programme of spiritual development. It is, however, retrospectively a very suggestive incident. The germ of Campbellism is found in the over-estimated value of immersion. Whenever an enhanced value is attributed to outward forms of religion, it always leads to theoretical dogmas, or to sacramental sanctification. The Campbellite heresy is the fullest development of what we understand to have been the evil deprecated by St. Paul, "the baptizing in his own name," which the world ever saw. But who supposes that Mr. C. ever felt this horror of having disciples baptized in his name, as a champion and a leader? And yet to prevent a similar evil, Paul was commissioned to preach the gospel without baptizing, because to baptize and make a hobby of it would have ministered to party feuds; and baptism was considered of too little value to the church, to be practiced at such cost of vital principle.

The argument, up to this point, has been to show that baptizing in Paul's commission to preach was only incidental, and not imperative, as though it were essential in carrying out the high behests of heaven, as some seem to regard it. And being so clearly a contingent duty, it cannot be exalted into a consideration of such intrinsic value, as

to constitute a *sine qua non* in settling the ground of christian fellowship, thereby rendering null and void all higher and more spiritual qualifications, such as spiritual regeneration. And if the whole question of baptism is too insignificant to justify divisions in a church, the mode of baptism must furnish still less justifiable ground for discord and division in the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This much for the conditional part of Paul's divine commission: next, comes the positive and imperative. *He was sent to preach the gospel.* How did he do it?

Paul's preaching of the gospel was marked by three distinguishing features: in its *matter;* in its *manner;* and in its *extent.* To each of these let us pay a passing notice.

Christ, and him crucified, was his constant theme. His first public discourse was in the synagogues at Damascus, to prove that Christ was the Son of God. As he increased in strength, he mightily confounded the Jews, proving that Jesus was the very Christ. Here was to them the rock of offence, and here he applied his arguments. At Thessalonica, he entered into their synagogue, and "three Sabbath days reasoned with them, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Most of his epistles open with the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah of God. To the Romans, his salutation is: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Here is a brief view of the gospel as Paul preached it. He began with Christ, and ended with Christ.

To the Church at Corinth he said: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." To the Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," or a new creation. Thus he teaches us that in the mighty work of the soul's regeneration, there is nothing that counts save Christ himself. For this most sufficient reason, he says to the Phillipians: "And be found in him,

not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He preached Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believed. The law of the Spirit of life which makes believers free from the law of sin and death, he placed in Christ. Deliverance from the noisome body of death, he ascribed to Christ. Such, indeed, was his estimate of Christ, that he proudly declares his loss of all things—a loss too, which was the result of deliberate choice,—for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Nay more, he gloried also in the marks of the Lord Jesus which he bore in his body—the marks of whips and the enduing scars of stonings, all suffered for preaching Christ. He preached this gospel from prison and prison bounds: he preached it in chains. He was transported in this condition from Jerusalem to Cesarea, and from Cesarea to Rome. To the Romans, he declared in his epistle: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." He preached Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. He declared that in Christ dwelt all the power of the God-head bodily; and that believers are complete in him—need no other ingredients in their religion, Christ being all and in all. To his merit, nothing could be added; especially, nothing by ceremonial washings. Jewish ablutions were all annulled, and Jewish sacrifices abolished, and the kingdom of heaven was set up. But outward things could not become of any more worth, after the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, than they were before. How could they? Could Christ make water baptism of more value in the christian religion, than circumcision was in the Jewish? Surely not. For this would have been to put away one ceremonial on account of its unprofitableness, and substitute it by another equally worthless as a saving element. If no saving virtue could be imparted to circumcision, none can be to water baptism. The two impossibilities are just equal. Here we see further evidence that Christ did not send Paul to baptize. Paul wrote and spoke on every essential principle of salvation, and yet there is not a word from him on this now mooted question, except an incidental disclaimer to the christian validity of John's baptism, as related in Acts, nineteenth chapter. And this may safely be regarded as one of many instances in which Paul, being set for the defence of the gospel, interposed his apostolic authority

against the incorporation of any one element of Jewish religion into the gospel of Christ. Paul knew that to admit these twelve disciples into the fellowship of the Ephesian church upon the authority of John's baptism, would be construed as accepting a rite which did not demand the acknowledgment of the Trinity in Unity of the everlasting God-head—a circumstance which demolishes forever the baptism of John as an example for christians. It is perfectly immaterial by what mode John baptized: all must confess that his baptism passed away with his peculiar office and dispensation; and with his baptism, its mode. Its effete and imperfect character was declared by the order of Paul that those disciples should be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, which was done by some other minister beside Paul. But Paul ceremonially laid his hands on them, and they then received the Holy Ghost, of whom they had significantly learned in their christian baptism. In view of these and other considerations not less grave, it is to us a most surprising fact that, ever since our earliest recollection, there have been persons claiming the right of teaching as if by eminence, who hold the preposterous notion that Christ's baptism by John before the public was an example to be followed by his disciples, and who have taught in all cases of immersion under their auspices that the gist of the thing consists in its being obedience to Christ's example. And yet a mind not crippled by prejudice will see at once, that it was impossible for Christ to be baptized, at any time, or in any mode, simply as an example for his followers. Neither his character nor his order left to him the possibility of receiving John's baptism, or his own, as an example for believers. Example proper cannot be set in cases where the conditions and moral obligations are essentially dissimilar. Where, we ask, in the name of unprejudiced candor, is it found that Christ's ceremonial consecration to the office of God's high priest on earth, in the river Jordan, by John the baptizer, the only official of God who could befittingly perform this consecration of Jesus to his public office as a divine teacher—where, we ask, is it found that this *sui generis* baptism, or Jewish priestly washing, was done or designed as an example for christians to follow in their baptism? I confess that to meet with men of good capacity in other respects, who can doggedly defend the idea that Christ took up John's baptism, grafted on to it a different ceremonial, and then made his own baptism by John an example for believers' baptism, leaves me less ground of confidence

in the reliability of human opinion, where prejudice exists, than I am willing to admit.

In all Paul's preaching there is little, very little, heard of baptism. Not a word did he say about baptism as if it were a doctrine proper, or any thing like a doctrine, of the gospel. Not a sermon did he ever preach in vindication of baptism, in any way, or as to any mode. What he did say referred to the spiritual truths acknowledged and vows assumed by baptism in the name of Christ: it only went to prove this one thing—that the baptized renounced sin, and professed full and implicit faith in Christ Jesus, and in all the grand and gracious benefits of his death; so much so, that they were said to be baptized into Christ's death. Now I would like to know why any mode of baptism may not lead the mind, by ceremonial allusion, to the death of Christ. May not the man who is baptized in the name and as the disciple of Jesus Christ, thus manifest his sole reliance on the cross, and his obligation to die unto sin, without any literal resemblance between the mode of his baptism and the mode of Christ's death?

We come next to speak of the *manner* of Paul's preaching. This was of no less decided a character than was the matter.

The general manner of Paul's preaching, as to style, was argumentative. We judge that his epistles afford unquestionable specimens both of the matter and manner of his synagogue discourses. Luke, in the Acts, tells us plainly that he did preach after this form. His reasoning seems to have been after the fashion of Christ's instruction to his disciples after his resurrection—namely, that if they had understood the prophecies concerning him, and had believed them, they would never have felt a jostle in the ground-work or in the frame-work of their faith. Hence, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. Oh! what a discourse that must have been. How often have I felt inclined to wish that I could have heard it. But we have the rich skeleton of it still unimpaired. It was somewhat after this divine model that Paul preached the gospel. At Thesalonica, for instance, he entered the synagogue, and three Sabbath days reasoned with the Jews out of the holy scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and entered into his glory. "And this crucified Jesus, about whom Jerusalem and all Judea have been so excited and confounded, is the veritable Christ—the Christ de-

scribed by your prophets. Look and see. No one but Jesus whom you have crucified, could ever answer the description given of Messiah by Isaiah."* Go, guilty unbeliever, compare notes with these delineated characteristics of Christ, and see if you can conceive of a mere Jewish prince entering upon his glory without suffering, and make such a prince the promised Prince of Peace. God's Messiah is foretold by all your prophets, so minutely that his entrance into Jerusalem upon an ass, and the foal of an ass, (as the prophet had phrased it, probably, a young unbroken ass,) was as necessary to meet that vastly significant monosyllable *needs*—Christ must *needs* suffer, and enter his glory—as was his crucifixion upon the hill of Calvary. It was necessary that all prophecies concerning Christ should be literally fulfilled, and all were so fulfilled; and then he cried: "It is finished."

But Paul's manner of preaching the gospel, as it regards style, is more fully set forth in his first letter to the Corinthians. Corinth was one of the proud and populous cities where this missionary apostle broke ground himself; a city where false apostles tried to oust him, and made it necessary that he should boast himself a little. They sought to depreciate Paul by ridicule, and by insinuations derogatory to his integrity. But all these attempts were weakened into mere pestiferous breath by his apostolic signs and seals, to which he could so undeniably appeal. He claimed to have begotten the whole of them in Christ Jesus; so that however many instructors they might have, they had only one ministerial, spiritual father. On this ground he claimed their christian affiliation. But as Corinth was a hot-bed of factionists, it afforded a fine opportunity for proselyters. But how did Paul break ground in Corinth? He says: "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God—and I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling—and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Whether Paul intended any difference between his speech and his preaching, and if so, what, we are not advised; but we suppose the terms to have been used then, as they are now, to distinguish between a sermon proper, and a hortatory address on the general subject of religion. But be the difference what it may,

* Isaiah iii, 53.

his style was the same in each. It consisted in the recital of God's testimonies or truths, as found in the scriptures of the Old Testament. These were brought forward, and their application to Christ, and their fulfilment in him and by him were simply declared. None of the apostles seem to have felt it a duty or a necessity to prove God's word true. They simply assumed and affirmed its truth, and called upon sinners to believe it, and to deport themselves accordingly. They did not stand at the door of a sinner's heart, and plead with him to yield to the chances of a verdict against himself; but they took a verdict already found, and walked into the heart's guilty chamber, and exhibiting Jehovah's bill of complaints, called upon him to plead "guilty" as to his conscience was clearly the fact, and judgment was at once entered up.

This manner of preaching, it is to be feared, has been too long neglected, and a reliance on logical reasoning, such as might appear well in a lawyer before a court and jury, or in a statesman before his peers and his country, has been substituted for that faith which declares God's testimonies, and leaves him to work out their verity by the demonstration of his Spirit and power. Or if there should be any approach to it, it is done rather in the way of a professional performance, than as a mere agency to be made powerful and efficient by the Holy Ghost. We do not feel that we are, in a peculiar sense, laborers together with God—ambassadors for Christ, sent not so much to negotiate about terms, as to demand submission. It will require the disclosures of the last day to tell what has been lost to the church by the error of her ministers in placing too much reliance on the wisdom of words. The hope of demolishing the fortresses of unbelief and sin, by mental troops or logical detachments, is a vain hope—at least, in our general warfare. Sinners must be arraigned before the law and the testimony of God, charged with a consciousness of their guilt, and left to the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. This is the way in which ministers ought to preach; and at this point arises the need of prayer by the church, for the want of which much preaching is lost. The Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer.

But it is time for us to subject our text, in another of its peculiar aspects, to a more critical examination. Paul's commission to preach the gospel, as it seems in the language of the text, made his obligation to baptize so contingent that he did not consider it a part of his call at all. Strange procedure this, if baptism is what our

Baptist friends claim it to be—the door into the church, and the ordeal of obedience. But his call to preach the gospel was a positive call in two aspects: first, he was to preach it; and secondly, he was to preach it without wisdom of words—that is, without any connection with the philosophy of Greece or Rome, or any dependence upon mere excellency of speech. This is no denunciation of a pure and good style in preaching, but a simple declaration that the style of preaching, so far as it concerns grammar and rhetoric, or even logic, philosophy, and oratory itself, is not the medium of spiritual power and success. This medium is found in the divine testimonies themselves. Wisdom of words cannot energize the truth with such power as dead souls demand. Indeed, if wisdom of words could add anything in the way of saving energy to the word of God's grace, then would it be settled that the divine word, like a musical instrument, gives forth better or worse sounds, according to the artistic skill of the performer. Not so, however, with the minister of the gospel. He strikes the keys of gospel truth and grace; and disdaining all the artistic rules which the fastidious taste of the auditors of the age may seek to impose upon him, he thunders from Sinai or weeps and woos from Calvary, as he judges best, and quietly leaves all issues to God's Holy Spirit.

But there was a positive prohibition in Paul's commission to preach. This negative part of his obligation is couched in terms of such import as to demand investigation with godly jealousy. The temptation to preach the gospel with wisdom of words was never greater than at this time; and the reason of its forbiddance is not entirely transparent to all minds. It is lest by wisdom of words we make the cross, or what we may consider the preaching of the cross itself, of none effect. This danger of burying the cross out of sight by wisdom of words, so as to destroy its meaning and power, is utterly unintelligible to carnal minds. They have not learned to distinguish between the proud delight they take in the poetic drapery cast about the cross by the delicate imaginings of their preacher, and the cross as it exhibits the love of the Father in the gift of the Son, and the love of the Son in dying for sinners. And yet in seeing and feeling this very distinction, lies the very life of the cross. It is possible for a master of oratory so to drape the cross, as to lead listeners to honor and glorify themselves, either in their heroic censure of the Scribes and Pharisees for the cruel treatment of Christ, or else in their enthusiastic ad-

miration of his life and death as the prince of philanthropists. But with him as the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world, they feel no adoring sympathy. The cross, in this high sense, is made of none effect.

This prohibition, so justly imposed by Christ upon his preachers, while it deprecated as weak and unavailing the wisdom of the world which had labored, but with constant failure, to make God known in former ages, looked no less to the more modern inventions of a proud philosophy seeking to rid itself of the necessity of dependence on the doctrine of a positive inspiration of the Scriptures for faith and salvation, with the special view of avoiding that mystery of godliness, *the incarnation*, and of bringing christianity sufficiently under the auspices of some school of German neology to make the story of the cross more a carnival for the revelry of reason, than a kneeling place for penitents. This tendency to bring the great central doctrine of the gospel—Christ crucified, crucified vicariously—into pleasant odor with a rationalistic philosophy, is diffusing itself more and more into every new modification of theology. It is to be detected, wherever it gains a foot-hold, by frequent gentle insinuations that there is a great deal of the human, as well as of the divine mind, to be looked for in the Bible. And they soon learn to make this want of inspiration as broad as the flattered cravings of a worldly spirit may demand. Many of these American neologists are strangely wrapped up in a modernized Swedenborgianism. They are wonderfully familiar with ideal spirits; can almost see and feel them; have no dread of them. But watch these religious lunatics, and if they belong at all, in their own classification, to the rationalistic philosophers, they are apt to wind up their rhapsody with a most respectful and religious announcement of their Bridge creed: I believe in one true and living God. This is Deism, as it is cultivated in the Church by the Unitarians of our day. Deism used to manifest itself by epithets of abuse lavished against Christ; but since its baptism and reception into the Church, it only believes in one true and living God. But its wisdom of words has made the cross of none effect.

There remains one other view of this subject to which we desire to call particular attention: it is the sense in which we should understand "excellency of speech" to be forbidden in Paul's commission to preach the gospel. There does not seem to us any sense in which it can be taken as contradistinguished from "wisdom of words,"

except that of composition; or if there be any other, or further sense, it must be that of fine elocution. Now, how is it that either or both of these pleasant accomplishments can make the gospel of none effect? There are several ways in which they might lead to such a result. There might be in the preacher himself such a looking to mannerism as to vitiate simple faith in the word; or there might be in the church such a readiness to account for success by the charming style and captivating eloquence of the preacher, as to render it necessary that God should withhold his Spirit, in order to save the Church from this man-worship, and to preserve unmixed to the end of time the pristine view of efficiency—"It is God that giveth the increase."

But our thoughts lead us to the conclusion, that this excellency of speech may be applied, directly and without any forcing, to the practice, in these days too common among us, of writing and reading sermons. Why, we ask, do so many ministers of a certain order of taste, go to the trouble of writing their sermons—for it is troublesome when viewed in connection with life's many calls—if it is not for "excellency of speech or of wisdom?" I do not think, after all the ingenious excuses given by the advocates of this pernicious practice, that but one ruling reason can be found for its adoption and use, and that is desire to attain excellency of speech and of wisdom. If these polished preachers believed that they could, by carefully conning over their rising thoughts and entering the pulpit from knees of wrestling prayer, produce an extemporaneous discourse which would elicit as much praise from the elite as one they can bring forth in manuscript from their studies after days of thinking—does any one suppose that they would write and read their sermons? Certainly not. There is not one of them who imagines that truth is any more truth, because it is first written; and certainly it does not add anything to the sublime grandeur of the pulpit, to see a preacher thumbing down his sermon for fear that a puff of wind will blow out his light, or fixing his eyes on every change in his position as if he revolved on an axis. And if no vital advantage is to be gained by writing a sermon, why do it? We answer again: it is for the sake of excellency of speech and of wisdom. It is not that the sermon may be more impregnated with truth, but merely that it may accord with grammar and rhetoric, and be pronounced a chaste and beautiful piece of English composition. And here, my dear brother, let

me tell you for your mortification that I often hear men who are men, pronounce your discourses very beautiful compositions, but very poor sermons.

But we do not play off, because we are either afraid or ashamed of our position; which is that, as a general result, the writing and reading of sermons for the common uses of preaching, makes the cross of none effect. Does not the history of the pulpit, everywhere, prove beyond the possibility of denial that discourses, first written and then read, or written and pronounced, are somehow shorn of their wonted power? Who ever saw under this form of preaching any of that heart-stirring influence which precedes and accompanies revivals of religion? And does not every one know that a simple sermon of that sort – to say nothing of a series of them—is deprecated as an evil in times of revival? There is, as a matter of necessity—doubtless of necessity—an absence of that peculiar unction which seems to give a sort of almightiness to a gospel sermon, when it gushes like a crystal stream fresh from the baptized heart of the preacher. Here every emotion expressed is a truthful thermometer of love divine within. But tell me nothing about it: my mind is clear that it must often happen in the delivery of written sermons, that the emotions are merely artificial; they may appear in the right place in the programme, but they are unnatural, and unable to call up their kindred tribe in others.

The ground I take involves so much that is exceedingly delicate, that modesty itself restrains me. This much, however, I must say for myself: that whether mine is an abnormal mind or not, one thing is certain, I cannot feel under a written sermon, as I can under an extemporaneous one; and I believe that the common sense of mankind has, by a general disapproval of the practice, given a verdict against it. It is an innate desire, partaking of the nature of a simple appetite, to crave feeling in all public addresses which would lead us to action in matters of interest. The extent to which a speaker can carry our active sympathies with him, is the measure of his probable success. And if nearly all the results of speaking are in favor of extemporaneous discourses as most efficient, why will ministers who could, if they would, extemporize well, persist in this dull round of reading, disliked by nine-tenths of mankind, if it is not for the eclat of excellency of speech? I do fear for all my friends who are about to inure their minds to this incubus on fine natural powers of speech. It is true, certainly true, that if a sermon-reader could have in his man-

uscript every word just as it would have risen in an impromptu discourse—fresh gushings of a present, internal fountain of feeling, yet when read, those words would fall on the ears and hearts of his audience like weary, worn-out winds. The curse of inefficiency has been universally stamped upon written sermons, when read to an audience, and called preaching. If badly read, it is murder; and if well, it is agreed that the man in the desk is a good writer, and a fine reader; but no one ever regards anything as preaching proper, unless it is generated and delivered as an impromptu production—all else is called preaching merely by grace. Every congregation that requires the pastor to serve it with prepared sermons, that is, sermons prepared to be read, is found to be as unmoved in all the emotional springs of piety, as a skeleton. Indeed, the underlying and prompting motive in those cases is, generally, quietism. But in these time-serving movements, as they creep in among us, there is an unsuspected element of vain glory. I have never conversed with a volunteer in this line of Methodist preaching, who did not leave me decidedly under the conviction, that ambition after excellency of speech and of wisdom was the real motive prompting him in the premises; and the avowed motive is to ensure the esteem, and gain the ear of the well informed. This all looks well—looks right; but somehow it does not work well. It is condemned by the comparative practical results. There is some way in which this reliance on excellency of speech vitiates the gospel; some way in which the cross is made of none effect. Hence, St. Paul would not preach the gospel with excellency of speech, or of wisdom. If he had pertinaciously adhered to all the school rules of composition and oratory as practiced by lawyers and senators, his power would have been located in his oratory—using the word oratory in the generic sense. But waiving all these facilities of speech, he simply declared God's testimonies. He planted himself on the truth of God's revelation, and demanded belief in it, and conformity of life to it. He never gave himself any trouble about the strict conformity of his speech and preaching to every law of grammar, and every rule of rhetoric, but declared the testimonies of his God in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. In his preaching, the cross was undraped, it stood out naked, the centre and soul of the gospel, and the only hope of sinners.

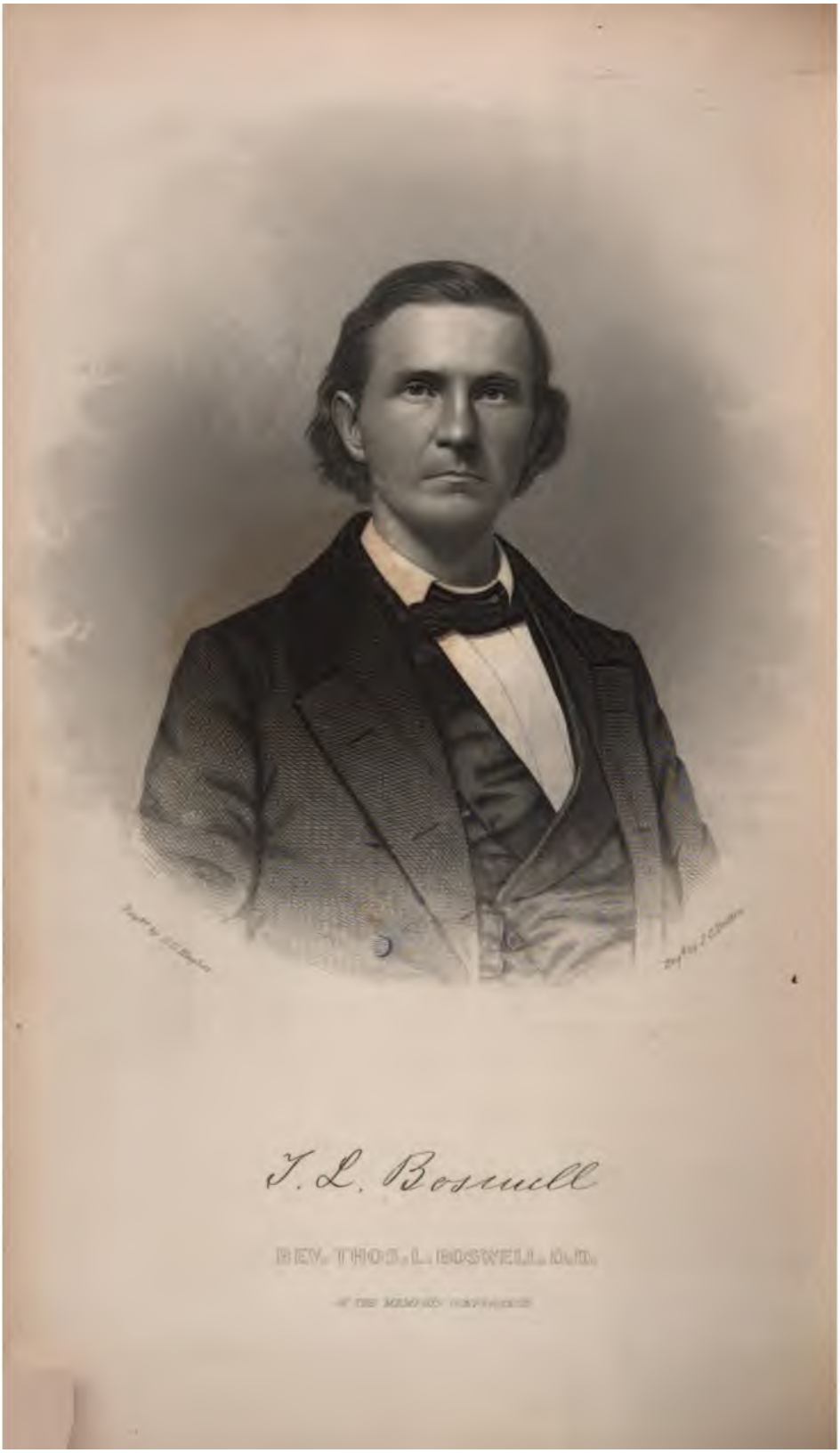
Having considered what seems to have been optional and what imperative in Paul's call to preach the gospel, to wit: the work of

baptizing; and also both the positive and the negative parts of what was imperative in his commission; and having shown, moreover, how he did preach, both as to matter and manner, we come, finally, to say a few things on the extent of his labors.

There were but few features in Paul's personal ministry more striking than the extent and abundance of his preaching. Referring to abundance he says: "In labors more abundant." In reference to his field, he says: "So that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation; but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand." Circuit-rider was once the sobriquet of a Methodist preacher. It was then used as a depreciative term. Circuit-riding was regarded as a low employment. But here was a precedent in circuit-riding, or perhaps, in Paul's case, it was circuit-walking, which fully justifies the Methodist in riding circuits. It is the best plan in the world for the wide and easy spread of gospel truth. It seeks to break new ground all the time. It is in exact accordance with the aggressive genius of the people. Paul's circuit, from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, was perhaps more than one thousand miles in length; but whether they were in direct line or not, he fully preached Christ in cities and in country. His theme was Christ crucified. Before the preaching of the cross, superstition, idolatry, and systems of false religion, venerable in years and powerful in patronage, fled like morning mists before the orb of day. He says that this style of preaching brought forth fruit in every place; that God always caused him to triumph through Christ. This was the effect of preaching Christ then, and has been ever since. Preaching must be done upon the simple basis of faith, faith in the word, faith because it is the word of the Lord that endureth forever. Our faith must not be in the logical arguments used, not in the captivating style, not in excellency of speech or of wisdom, but in the great doctrines of the cross. And if we catch the proper inspiration of this doctrine, like Paul, we will restlessly strive to make Christ known to such as had not heard of his name in this relation before. Whatever we may or may not do in this aggressive line, if the spirit of preaching the gospel to every creature is properly upon us, we will show our divine calling by our labor in the lanes of poverty and in

the destitute districts of the country. A preacher who can content himself through life to sit down in some good pasture, and write off, and gracefully read off a sermon or two every Sunday, and feel no call to preach to the destitute that lie all round him, is surely not a minister of Jesus Christ. No such pastors and preachers are reported to us in the New Testament. Look and see. The extent to which a minister preaches the gospel, he being able to choose his course, has much to do with the evidence of a divine call to the ministry. A man may have a local charge, but no man can do his duty by giving himself to one congregation, while there are large numbers of neglected souls in easy reach of him. But we will here close this humble essay. We have glanced at one or two things which lie without the beaten pathway of our predecessors in exposition. Our great desire is to wake up in all our preachers a jealous, just concern to guard against all the chances of making the cross of none effect by wisdom of words.

Let Paul's account of a gospel ministry be our motto: "But if all prophesy and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If any one ever saw the like of this under a sermon read, no matter what its excellency of speech, he has seen what I have not. Let us prophesy that is declare the testimonies of God.



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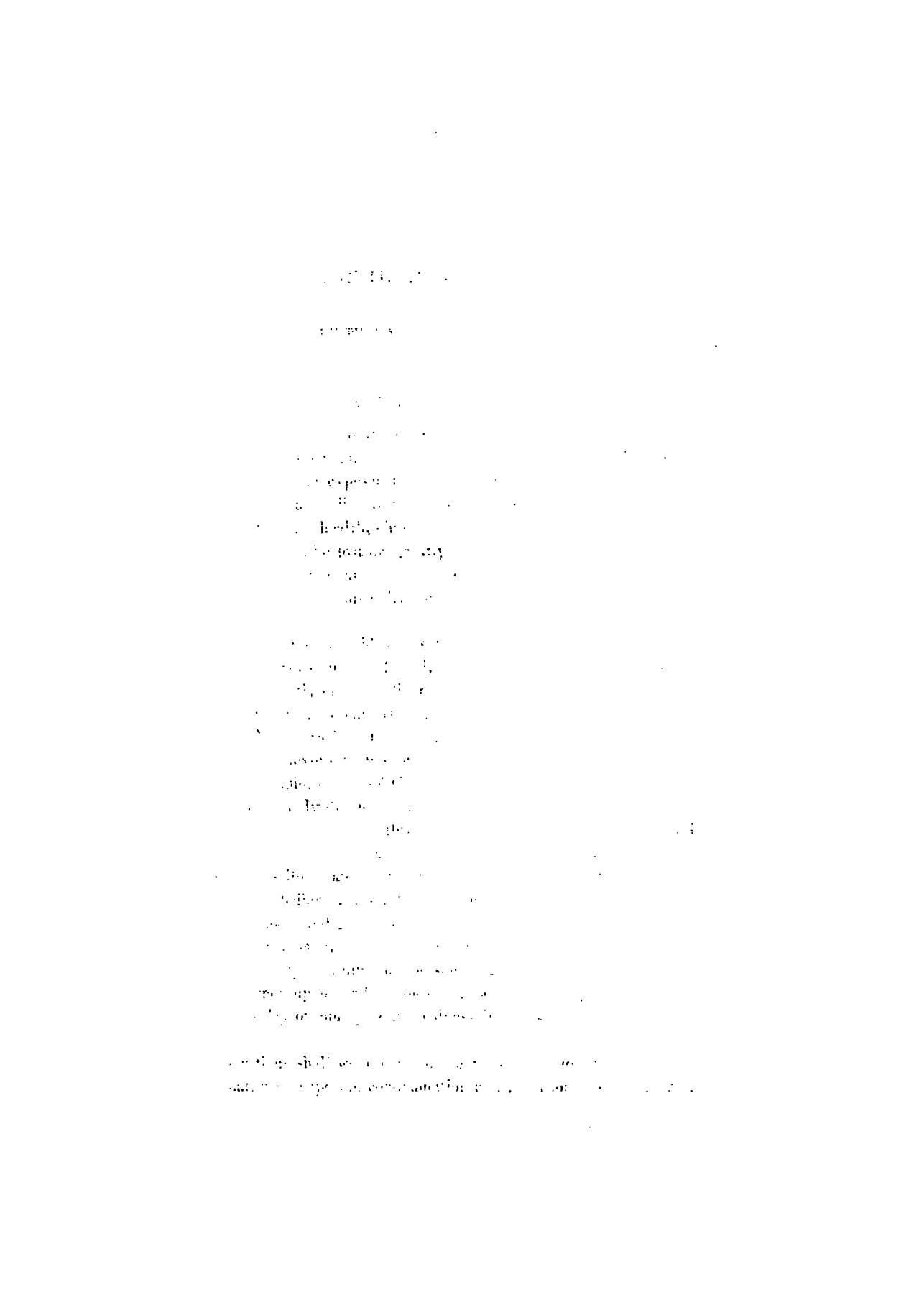

SALVATION IN ITS INDIVIDUAL RELATIONS.

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"What must I do to be saved?"—Acts xvi, 30.

SALVATION is commonly understood as deliverance from danger, whether temporal or spiritual. It is therefore a subject of the greatest moment to one exposed to imminent danger. Its importance is to be estimated according to the magnitude of the interests involved. Hence, if a man's health, character, or life, is exposed to great danger, and likely to be lost or greatly damaged, and it is quite beyond his power to escape, and in his great extremity some kind friend interposes and effects his deliverance, he is gratefully appreciated as *a saviour*.

But let us apply the idea of salvation in a spiritual sense to the interests of man's immortal soul, and the greatness of the danger (and consequently of the deliverance) is at once inconceivably augmented. Think of an immortal soul, all polluted with sin and iniquity, exposed to the wrath of God, "in danger of eternal damnation;" think of the inexorable law of God—the claims of infinite justice; think of the infinite love of God in the gift of his eternal Son, to be made flesh and dwell among us; think of his midnight prayers, his agonizing sweat of blood; think of his sufferings on the cross, and ignominious death!—and all to atone for sin, and to make the sinner's salvation possible; and then think of this salvation actually applied to a penitent believer, through the agency of the Eternal Spirit: How great, and good, and glorious! Well might the angels desire to look into these things, and rejoice more over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons that need no repentance. And well may men upon earth rejoice and be exceeding glad at so gracious a display of omnipotent goodness in the salvation of perishing sinners.

"How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How shall we escape the condemnation and pollution of sin, the wrath

of God, and the damnation of hell? There is no escape if we neglect the salvation of Christ. Sinners can only escape the fearful retributions of the future by seeking, finding, and perfecting the salvation in question. Hence the great importance of the question proposed in the text—"What must I do to be saved?"

It is now proposed to call attention to the subject of *salvation in its individual relations.*

I. Salvation is an *individual concernment.*

There must be a deep and abiding conviction of this truth in the sinner's heart before he will even consent to seek salvation. He must be made to feel and say, "Let others choose whom they will serve,"—wealth, honor, pleasure, &c.—"as for me, I will serve the Lord."

1. Acting under this *personal* resolution, the sincere penitent will not neglect his salvation on account of the adverse influence of others. He will give no heed to the *doubts* of the skeptic, the *scoffs* of the infidel, and *false reason* of the Deist. He is not discouraged at the fact that false professors of religion occasionally appear in the Church; that some "run well for a while" and then turn back to the world; that others are deceived and miss their way, &c. He judges no man—his *concern* is with *himself.*

One of the greatest hindrances to personal religion is the spirit and practice of judging others. Therefore the Great Teacher says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." In opposition to this, a sinner, blind and ignorant in spiritual things, sets himself up to judge; and he very readily decides upon the character of the members of the Church—one is a hypocrite, another is a backslider, and the balance cold and formal. Therefore I shall not seek religion—not join the Church—I am as good as the best of them. And thus he excuses himself on the score of others. Now, what right or qualification has one short-sighted, fallible man, to judge another? And what has the hypocrisy, backsliding, &c., of others, to do with a man's own personal religion? Let no man judge another in these things. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." "Every one shall give account of himself to God." So far from these considerations operating a discouragement to one seeking salvation, they should convince him that the circulation of counterfeits proves the existence of a genuine currency,

and should stimulate him to greater efforts in seeking to obtain it. Hence these evil influences from others should not cause us to neglect our own personal salvation.

2. It should not be neglected on account of *human speculations.* Some persons have quieted themselves in the neglect of salvation on the ground that "If I am to be saved, I will be saved." "When God's good time shall come, I shall be brought in." And in the day of his power, his people shall (as an old New England divine once said) be *made* willing. This human scheme of salvation has kept thousands from "striving to enter in at the straight gate," until the master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and excluded them forever from the possibility of salvation.

On the other hand, others have rested their hopes of heaven on the *infinite benevolence* of God--that he will finally save all men in heaven; and consequently, have neglected their personal salvation. And there are others who are simply resting in the neglect of personal salvation on the supposition, that "there is time enough yet"--a sophism that has drowned millions in destruction and perdition! Still men rest upon this broken reed, and glide along softly, singing to themselves "time enough yet." May the Holy Spirit awaken such sleepers from their dangerous and almost fatal slumbers, that they may seek an individual interest in the Saviour of sinners!

Human speculations will never awaken sinners to see their need of Christ. Suppose a man could prove that if I am to be saved, I will be saved; will such preaching be the means of saving my soul from sin? Suppose another man should convince me that all men will eventually be saved; is it likely that I would be alarmed on account of my sins, so as to flee from the wrath to come? And suppose a third should persuade me that I need give myself no personal concern about salvation; when God's good time shall come, he will make me willing, and bring me in—and "Be easy, my child, there is time enough yet." Would such a gospel as this awaken sinners—cause them to break off their sins and come to Christ? Nay, verily. The reason is, it is not personal, individual, direct; hence there are no personal and direct results in convictions and conversions under such ministrations.

3. It should not be *personally neglected,* and left to the *ecclesiastical attorneyship* of others. If I mistake not, this was the great and fatal error of the Jews who attended upon the public ministry of

John the Baptist, our blessed Lord, and his apostles. They were wont to say, "We have Abraham to our father;" we were elected in him to the favor and salvation of God, and we have descended from him in an unbroken succession, and "have never been in bondage to any man." Therefore your doctrine of *personal* conviction, repentance, faith, conversion, &c., does not apply to us. All this, and more, has been secured to us in our father Abraham. Is it any wonder they should have held the tradition, "that Abraham stands at the gates of hell, and will not suffer an Israelite to go in thereat?" In opposition to this great error, John the Baptist testifies against them, that their exclusive claims to salvation in Abraham, by virtue of their succession from him, are nothing in the sight of God, in absence of personal faith and obedience. He says: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"—that is, spiritual children, by *personal faith* in Christ Jesus. It is also ignored by our blessed Lord: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed"—in a natural sense, and by ecclesiastical succession from him—but this does not save you; for "ye seek to kill me, (and no murderer hath eternal life in him,) because my word hath no place in you." But, "If ye were Abraham's children," by personal faith in me, "ye would do the works of Abraham." The great Apostle to the Gentiles is no less explicit on this point. He says, "Circumcision is nothing;" all that Abraham and all others in succession from him can do for you as ecclesiastical attorneys in religion, without your own individual faith and obedience, amounts to nothing; "And uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God"—faith working by love, by which you become "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

Now, when we consider the extent of this error, its evil tendencies, and its great opposition to the progress of "pure and undefiled religion," we are not surprised that it was promptly met and confuted by the greatest authorities in the whole range of Christianity. In its extent, it was almost universal among the Jews at the time alluded to, its evil tendency was to extinguish among them all personal and experimental religion; it secularized their notions of the Messiah and his kingdom, and resulted in the total ruin of their national polity. It was a mighty barrier to the progress of spiritual religion. Neither John, nor Christ, nor Paul, could succeed in the truth of God's message of individual salvation till this wall of brass was broken down.

But let us come a little nearer home in our inquiries on this subject of ecclesiastical attorneyship in matters of religion. And how many thousands are there who call themselves Christians who have given up all personal and independent thinking, acting, and realizing for themselves, through the grace of God, the religion of Christ, for the vain notion of *priestly absolution.* Ask them what they believe, and the reply is, "I believe what the Church believes." But what does the Church believe? "The Church believes what I believe." But what do you both believe? "We both believe the same thing." No independence in thinking and believing. Again; if you should hear one swear, or see another drunk, and reprove them of their sins, they would most likely (as it was in the days of Wesley) refer you to their *priestly absolution*—"I have been baptized; I have been confirmed; I receive the sacrament from apostolic hands," &c. And thus they excuse themselves and cover their sins under the cloak of sacerdotal absolution—what their ecclesiastical attorneys have done for them. Ask them of their religious experience, assurance, and prospects, and they can only say they have committed their religious interests into the hands of the priest, and they suppose *he* is managing all for the best. Oh, what a pity that so many thousands of God's people, religiously blind, should be led on by blind Nicodemuses, that they should all fall into the ditch together!

Priestly absolution!—what is it? It is said to be the power to forgive sin. But who can forgive sin but God? He alone possesses infinite wisdom to *know* the sins man has committed, and he alone has *power* to forgive them when known. Sins to be forgiven must be known. The priest has not this knowledge, as he cannot penetrate the secrets of another's heart. He cannot come to the possession of this knowledge by *auricular* confession; for no man can call to mind all his sins in thought, word, and deed. But if he could know all the sins of the penitent confessor, he has no power sufficient to forgive. This is plain from the fact, that the Jews, regarding our Saviour as a mere man, called in question his *power* to forgive sin, and accused him of blasphemy; and he, to vindicate himself from so foul a charge, and to establish his authority in the premises, gave a stupendous exhibition of *Divine power*, by saying to the man sick of the palsy, whose sins he had just forgiven—"Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose and went to his house." I know that it is contended that "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" were given

tendency is to *sensualize* religion. It ignores all *experience* in religion and reducing it to something that is tangible to the senses—that can be seen, and heard, and handled; hence, the motto is, "Do religion." *Obedience* is more necessary than faith. There was plenty of this kind of religion in the day of our Saviour and His apostles; but they repudiated the whole of it as "making clean the outside of the cup and platter, while within they were full of extortion and excess." Instead of this they taught that men must have *pure hearts* in order to see God. There was plenty of the outward *doing* of religion in the days of Luther; but he rejected it all for the Scriptural doctrine of "justification by faith." The Church of England abounded with the outward *forms* of godliness in the days of Wesley, and he himself was a long time subject to a sacramental salvation; but, when the eyes of his understanding were opened, he laid it all aside for the "more excellent way" of "salvation by faith." In all this we see that the "word only" system is wofully *heterodox* in theology. In the third place, this "word only" view of the operation of the Spirit operates *fatally* to the religious interests of a large and helpless portion of our race. It effectually excludes from all possibility of salvation every individual of the race who is incapable of being benefitted by the word. How can infants be saved if the Spirit operates only through the word—the Spirit saves *only* through the word—therefore infants cannot be saved! Horrible conclusion. Who can believe it? Now, it must be apparent to all thinking minds that that system must be founded in error against which so many weighty objections are found to exist; and especially, when the crowning objection—that it is *totally* wanting in support from the pages of holy inspiration—is added to the foregoing. Where is it taught in the Scriptures that "the Spirit operates only through the word?" It is a mere *assumption* which was found necessary to an extended system of new-divinity. The old way of *experimental* religion must be set aside—a new system of *doing* religion is to be introduced—and, in this, there is no *necessity* and no *plan* for the direct operation of the Spirit.

Having shown that the "word only" system is false and fatal in its tendencies, I will now proceed to set forth the teaching of the Bible in regard to the direct operation of the Spirit, and its blessed results.

(1.) The Holy Spirit is a *Divine Person*—"of one substance, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God."

He is then infinitely wise and powerful—everywhere present—and therefore capable of making direct communication to the mind of the sinner—for, "with God all things are possible."

(2.) "There is a spirit in man" underived from matter, and capable of conscious and intelligent existence apart from matter; hence, it is immaterial. In proof of this, we learn from the Bible, that God originally "formed man's body of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; (Heb. *lives*, animal, intellectual, and spiritual;) and man became a living soul." Here then is the origin of the spirit that is in man, not from the earth, not from organization, but from God; hence, when "the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it," and receives its position in weal or wo, "according to the deeds done in the body," and is capable of a conscious and intelligent existence in a disembodied state. This is amply proved by the argument of our Lord in opposition to the materialism of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of angels and spirits. He says to them, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the *dead* but of the *living*." That is, God is the God of the living and happy spirits of those venerable patriarchs, notwithstanding their bodies had been mouldering and mingling in the dust of Machpelah for more than sixteen centuries. Again, the great teacher gives us evidence of the same great truth in the *narrative* of the rich man and Lazarus. They lived through their probation on earth, the former in wealth and affluence, gratifying "the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and careless about religion; the latter, in poverty and affliction, but deeply pious, laying up his treasures in heaven; he died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom to rest; he is conscious and happy in a disembodied state. "The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment;" hence, his spirit is living and conscious of torment; for he says, "I am tormented in this flame." Moreover, his conversation with Abraham shows that he was *intelligent* as well as conscious; but the mind cannot be intelligent without ideas—the rich man had ideas of the torments of hell in a disembodied state: therefore the mind is capable of receiving ideas independent of the senses. Once more, there is evidence of the same great truth in the transfiguration of our Lord. Peter,

and James, and John, are selected to witness the transcendent glory of their Lord; and on this interesting occasion "there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus" Elias was a glorified saint in soul and body, for he had been translated that he should not see death; but Moses was a disembodied spirit. He had suffered death—his body was buried and given to the dust, but here we find his spirit living, intelligent, and happy. He is talking with Jesus; but men cannot talk sensibly without ideas; therefore the spirit of man is capable of receiving ideas apart from matter. Hence, I conclude that the human mind is *immaterial* and capable of receiving *direct influences* from the Divine Spirit independent of the outward senses.

(3.) The Scriptures furnish abundant proof of the fact that many of the most important *ideas* ever communicated to the mind of man have been made without the medium of the outward senses.

In the days of Job, under the Patriarchal dispensation, the prevailing doctrine was, as set forth by Elihu, that "there is a spirit in man;"—materialism was not then known—"and the *inspiration* of the Almighty giveth them understanding." "Inspiration" is defined by the best authorities to be "any supernatural influence of the Spirit of God upon the mind of a rational creature, whereby he is formed to a degree of intellectual improvement to which he could not have attained in a natural way." This is true of the inspiration of the Scriptures; but, if these great revelations were made to the minds of holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, in a supernatural way without the medium of the outward senses, the Spirit of God can convict, convert, and sanctify the soul of man in the same way now—I mean by direct communication.

In the days of our Saviour the most momentous idea ever communicated to the human mind was by direct influence without the intervention of "flesh and blood"—the outward senses. It is the idea contained in the noble confession of Peter when Jesus put the question to the apostles, "But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus, in reply, said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood"—human teaching and human senses—"hath not revealed it unto thee"—for they had it not in possession—"but my Father which is in heaven"—who alone could, by His spirit, impart this great truth to your mind. Now, if this great truth could be revealed to

the mind of Peter without the agency of "flesh and blood," there can be no good reason for denying the direct operation of the Spirit in conviction, &c.

Additional evidence is found on this point in the instructions given by our Lord to his apostles in view of their being brought before "magistrates and powers;" he says to them, "Take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the *Holy Ghost* shall *teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*' Here is direct spiritual influence *promised* beyond a doubt, and the fulfilment of this promise to the disciples and primitive christians proves the truth of my proposition—that the human mind is susceptible of direct communications by the Holy Ghost.

Finally, "the Spirit of adoption" is conclusive proof of the direct operation of the Spirit in the work of salvation. On this point St. Paul says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Again, he says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father." And St. John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." These passages set forth in unmistakable language the agency of the Spirit of adoption in christian assurance, which it is at once the duty and privilege of every christian to enjoy. And it is equally plain that His Divine testimony is borne directly to the spirit of the child of God—the Spirit beareth witness with our *spirits*—not our senses. God sends forth the spirit of His Son into our *hearts*—not to our senses. The christian has the witness *in himself*—not from others—not through the outward senses—but from the direct witness of the Spirit.

It is not intended in this connection to make the impression that the Spirit does not operate through the word. Far from it. The word is the sword of the Spirit; and the mind can be reached through the senses. But the object is to establish the fact, that he is not confined *alone* to this channel of communication, and that the heart of man is capable of direct conviction, conversion, and sanctification, which is conceived to be the only ground of all spiritual and experimental religion.

In order to produce conviction on the mind of sinners, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, the Father hath sent him into the world to "re-

prove " or convince " the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." To this end he was *striving* with man in the days of Noah, directly—through the word preached by Noah—and by the long-suffering of God, and the threatening of judgment. But they *resisted* all and were destroyed. He was engaged in the days of the Saviour, *striving* with the hearts of men—casting out devils, and doing wonders by his direct agency. He also employed the outward word as preached by the apostles—applied the mercies of God and threatened his judgments. But the unbelievers rejected his word, trampled upon his mercies, disregarded his judgments, blasphemed his Holy Spirit, and were overthrown with a terrible destruction. In view of all this, we are exhorted not to resist the Holy Ghost as the Fathers did: " quench not the Spirit "—" to-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts," " lest we fall after the same example of unbelief."

Conviction, in a general sense, is the assurance of the truth of any proposition. And when applied in a personal and religious sense, it is an assurance from the Holy Spirit that man is a guilty sinner before God. It is the knowledge of sin. When this conviction is produced, then the sinner's own *individual agency* is called into requisition, first in *volition*. " If any man *will* come after me," he must be *willing* to take up his cross, and *willing* to follow Jesus in evil as well as good report. In the second place, he must *individually repent*. He must deeply feel a godly sorrow for sin—he must forsake all his sins—he must confess his sins to God, and learn to do well; and thus to *reform* his life. A knowledge of sin however, will not save him—willingness to be a christian will not save him, and reformation of life will not save him. So far from this, the whole course of conviction and repentance will lead him to a point of *self-distrust* and *self-despair*—that he cannot save himself. Then, in the third place, he must *individually believe*. This is a thorough conviction of the truth of the christian religion—a satisfactory assurance of the sufficiency of that truth to accomplish all that it proposes to do—and an entire trust of soul and body, for time and eternity, on the great Author of that truth, Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. This is the great condition of personal salvation: " He that believeth shall be saved;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" " If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believes;" " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Thus far

we see *individual human agency* employed in "working our salvation;" not indeed without divine assistance, for without the aid of the Spirit of Christ we can do nothing.

2. In *conversion* the Spirit operates directly upon the hearts of penitent believers. Conversion, in this connection, is a general term which includes several particulars; and—

(1.) It includes *justification*, that act of God by which he graciously pardons the penitent believer—forgives all his past sins, for Christ's sake — *absolves* him from guilt and condemnation— restores him to his divine favor, and treats him as innocent. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is the only condition of this great work done for us. Whatever we may be supposed to have, without faith we cannot be justified; and whatever we may lack in the exercise of faith we shall be justified. The reason is, that faith appropriates the *merits* of Christ to the penitent individual, and thus presents to the Father an *infinite* consideration why the sinner should be pardoned—and the work is done.

(2.) Conversion includes the work of *regeneration*; and, so far as we can learn, the scriptural order of the work of salvation, it follows justification, is one of its concomitants, and, of course, inseparable from it. In proof of this, St. Paul says: "If any man be in Christ," by justification, "he is a new creature," by regeneration. The reason of this order is plain, for when the sinner is pardoned, there is then no obstruction in the way of his regeneration; there is no need of an additional act of faith as it is concomitant with justification, so that he that is justified must be at the same time regenerated. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit directly on the heart of the penitent believer; hence, our Saviour teaches that we "must be born of the Spirit," "and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." This shows the individual and spiritual nature of regeneration. Again, we learn from St. John that as "many as received him,(Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This important passage clearly defines the agent of spiritual regeneration as well as man's individual relation to it. The evangelist is exceedingly careful, in the first place, to exclude all human agency from all participation in it. He says the sons of God are born, begotten, or regen-

erated, "not of blood"—by descent from Abraham, which has already been noticed as the great error of the Jews in trusting to their succession from Abraham more than in God and individual piety. This is a vain hope, whether it is founded on Abraham, the Virgin Mary, Peter, Paul, or any one else, and can never "make the comers thereunto perfect." Regeneration is not "by the will of the flesh"—natural generation. Natural generation can never produce a holy seed so long as the progenitors are *naturally depraved*; like must produce its like; and, whatever man may acquire by grace through faith, it will have no effect on his natural generation. Neither is this great work effected by "the will of man." One man cannot regenerate another by an act of his will—in faith or otherwise. This at once and forever excludes the idea of *baptismal regeneration*; for baptism can only be given by the will of man, and St. John expressly tells us that regeneration is not by his will. Regeneration by baptism is one of the greatest absurdities that could possibly occupy the human mind. I had as soon believe in the doctrines of *transubstantiation* as this. There is about as much scripture and reason for one as the other. I know it is said that Saul was commanded to "arise and be baptized and wash away his sins," and that Peter exhorted the people on the day of Pentecost to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," &c. But there is just as much authority for transubstantiation. Jesus says, in reference to the consecrated elements of the Eucharist: "This is my body,"—"this is my blood." Now, if these passages are to be taken just as they stand, we must believe not only in baptismal regeneration, but that the elements of the holy supper are changed into the body and blood and soul and divinity of our blessed Lord, by mere *priestly consecration*. But, says the zealous Protestant, the words of institution in the sacrament must be explained—"This *denotes* my blood"—"this *signifies* or *represents* my body"—and so we demolish the Romanist at a stroke, and fairly enough too; for this mode of interpretation must be applied to other portions of holy scripture, such as the parable of the tares of the field; in reference to this Jesus says: "The field *is* the world;" that is, it *represents* the world. "The good seed *are* the children of the kingdom;" that is, *denotes*, &c. "The tares *are* the children of the wicked one;" that is, they *signify* the children of the wicked one. Now, if this is a just rule of interpretation, why not demolish the Romish doctrine of baptismal regeneration, by ap-

plying it to the passages cited from the Acts, in support of that monstrous dogma? We would thus understand the apostles: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, *and represent* the remission of sins," and in the case of Saul: "Arise and be baptized, *and denote*, or *signify*, the washing away of thy sins," &c.; and in this way rid ourselves and the church of the unscriptural doctrine of Romish, Anglican, and all high church baptismal regeneration as well as Romish transubstantiation. Thanks be to God that the great interests of individual salvation have not been left to the precarious contingency of the will of man in baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, or anything else that depends upon his will. So far from this, inspired authority assures us that, in regeneration the penitent believer is *born of God*, that is, of His Spirit, and that which is born of the Spirit is spiritual, powerful, and saving.

(3.) Next to regeneration in the order of grace, as we humbly conceive, stands the *spirit of adoption*, which is also included in the general term conversion. This is that work of grace performed by the agency of the Holy Spirit, by which he bears a direct witness to the spirit of the justified and regenerate believer, that he is a child of God—a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, and an heir to an incorruptible inheritance which is undefiled and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for the faithful.

This is the great privilege of all christians. It is the source of their present joy and future hope. It is their comfort and support in trouble and affliction, and their courage and fortitude in contending against their spiritual enemies, and in the valley and shadow of death. And as it is of so great importance in the christian's life and experience, we are devoutly thankful that it has not been left in doubt by the inspired writers. They tell us that "the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." And, "because we are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father." And, "he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." Nothing more explicit is needful on this point. He that hath this witness in himself can adopt the language of one of old: "One thing *I know*, that, whereas *I* was blind, now *I* see." The change is personal, spiritual, and conscious, through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. There are outward evidences that serve to corroborate christian experience on this point, such as the love of the brethren—love of the ordinances

of religion—hatred of evil, and the follies and vanities of the world. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," which includes all the graces of christianity.

3. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Ghost, and the highest degree of christian experience attainable in this life. "It is the will of God," says St. Paul, "even your sanctification." And "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." This is sufficient to show that sanctification is attainable by all who are convinced of its necessity, and will seek it according to the will of God.

The necessity of this work is found in the indwelling seeds of sin and roots of bitterness still remaining in the hearts of regenerate persons. For regeneration does not destroy all the remains of the carnal mind, though it implies a change of our nature, and establishes the reign of grace, and is itself the incipient stage of sanctification. In proof of this, while every justified person is enabled to maintain the *reign* of grace, and prevent the *dominion* of sin, he feels that he has a constant warfare with unsanctified passions and tempers. Hence St. Paul, after acknowledging that the Thessalonians had received the gospel, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,"—had recognized "their election of God;" and, remembering with approbation, "their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God our Father,"—after all this, he prays for their entire sanctification, saying: "The very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I want no other evidence than this of the necessity of this great and good work. None of us can claim higher attainments than those accredited to the christians at Thessalonica, and they needed to be *wholly* sanctified—so do we. Let us then inquire what it is. And,

(1.) *It is to be set apart to the service of God.* This much may be included in regeneration, in which much acceptable service may be rendered to God. All such are "babes in Christ,"—"little children because their sins are forgiven."

(2.) *It is to be cleansed from all unrighteousness* by a personal application of the blood of Christ through the Spirit. It is not "by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, Christ entered in once into the holy place, having obtained redemption for us. For

if (under the law) the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the *blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience from dead works*, to serve the living God!"

(3.) It is to be filled with the mind which was in Christ Jesus—love, meekness, and humility. It is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is "walking in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us." Love is the ruling principle of the sanctified heart—meekness characterizes its relations with men, and humility uproots and destroys every vestige of "pride and fond desire," so that there is nothing in it contrary to the "mind of Christ."

(4.) This state of grace and salvation is developed by a gradual growth under the gracious influence of the Spirit, in connection with the means of grace. Hence, we are exhorted to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To "add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity," and thus to "go on to perfection" "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It is illustrated by Christ according to the growth of grain—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" and by John, according to the growth of man: first, "little children," then "young men," finally, "fathers."

(5.) This state of grace does *not exempt the sanctified from temptation and liability to sin while on probation.* Some of the angels "kept not their first estate," but sinned and fell. Adam *sinned* and was expelled from Paradise, and sanctified christians may sin and fall too: hence, they must watch and pray. It does not exclude the *infirmities* of our finite natures while in this state of being. The best of men are still liable to *err*, to *mistake*, &c.; hence, they must still pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," &c., and feel—

> "Every moment, Lord I need,
> The merit of Thy death."

This is what we humbly conceive to be salvation from sin in this life in its *individual experience*, as it is wrought in all who seek it by faith in Jesus through the *direct* agency of the *Holy Ghost.* This is the cementing element of our great spiritual temple. Methodism

originated in *reading the Scriptures* and seeking *spiritual* religion. [illegible]n. She has had her growth and unparalleled success in preaching an[illegible]nd realizing the direct operation of the Spirit in conviction, conversion [illegible]n, and sanctification; and, by zealously maintaining this doctrine in [illegible] in *teaching* and *experience*, she will carry down the blessed institutions [illegible] ns of the gospel *pure* and *efficient* to the latest generations: but, if she [illegible]he proves unfaithful in her high and heaven-born mission—backslides [illegible]les from spiritual religion—substituting for it succession, ceremonies [illegible]es, forms, and sacraments, "*Ichabod*" will be written upon her pulpits [illegible]ts, her altars, and her hearts, the glory will have departed, and Go[illegible]od will spue her out of His mouth.

III. Salvation is an *individual practice* of the *duties*, *privileges* [illegible]*es*, and *responsibilities* of religion.

(1.) Authoritative commands originate and impose *duties* upon a[illegible]all intelligent subjects; it is therefore the duty of all men to *do* wha[illegible]at God commands, and to *abstain* from all that he forbids. The *deca*[illegible]*logue*, as contained in the Old Testament, comprises an admirab[illegible]ble code of *moral duties*, all that we should do, and all that we shou[illegible]ld not do, in the relations we hold to God, our neighbor, and ourselve[illegible]es. Our Saviour sums it all up in "two commandments"—love to Go[illegible]d, and love to man—which, the apostle says, "is the fulfilling of t[illegible]he law." Some of the duties arising out of our present relations, a[illegible]nd enjoined by religion, will be found delicate, some unpleasant, so[illegible]me difficult, others pleasant and agreeable—*none impossible;* for t[illegible]he commandments of God "are not grievous," He is not "a hard m[illegible]as-ter," His "yoke is easy and His burden light." All His comma[illegible]nds are reasonable and profitable to those who are exercised therein, a[illegible]nd all His prohibitions are for our good.

(2.) *Privileges* result from the *rights* freely bestowed on Christia[illegible]ns. Thus, man has a *right* to life, liberty, and property; and from t[illegible]his flows the privileges he enjoys therein. Man has a *right* to *liberty of conscience* in matters of religion, and from this right result his [illegible]nu-merous *religious privileges*. This gives him the privilege to th[illegible]ink for himself, believe for himself, and to worship God according to [illegible]*his* word, without any to molest, or to make him afraid. In the exer[illegible]*ise* of this right it is a glorious privilege to "search the Scriptures dail[illegible]*y*;" inasmuch as "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures mi[illegible]*ght*

have hope." It likewise secures to every child of God the inestimable privilege of *praying* to his heavenly "*Father in secret*," under the encouraging promise that his Father, "who seeth in secret, will reward him openly." Every head of a family has the privilege of worshipping God in his house; every gifted christian has the privilege of praying and speaking in the church for spiritual edification; every christian has the privilege of attending upon the ordinances of God—hearing the word read and expounded—attending upon the holy communion, and to "speak often one to another" of the dealings of God with their souls; and thus, in the *improvement* of their privileges, to "build each other up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

(3.) *Responsibilities* result from *important interests* being committed to the care of intelligent *moral agents*. Here we must observe that God gives "to every man according to his ability;" to one he gives five talents, to another two, to another one, and holds each one responsible for what he has received. To one he gives the great and important trust of *preaching the gospel*, and holds him responsible for the faithful discharge of this important trust. To another the *gift of exhortation*—to another the responsibility of "working out his own salvation:"—to every man according to the grace given to him, whether "prophecy," says the Apostle, "let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith, or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation:" but let every man know that he is responsible for what he has received, and must "give account of himself to God."

God has given to his *pastors* the solemn responsibility of taking the oversight of His flock. He says to them: "feed my sheep—feed my lambs,"—bring them into the fold and set the seal of the covenant upon them in their infancy. He has also imposed a great responsibility on *parents* in "training up their children in the way they should go"—"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," that, "when they become old, they may not depart from it." Fearful will be the accountability of those who neglect, or abuse, this responsibility; but, eternity alone will tell the blessedness of its right and faithful observance. The great Head of the Church has also enjoined the responsibility on "*masters* to give to their *servants* that which is just and equal; knowing that they also have a Master in heaven," to whom they are accountable. Here is a clear recognition of the relation of

master and *servant*. The master has the right to the *time* and labor of the servant; and, while the servant is his, and accountable to him, he is entitled to that which is "just and equal." And what is that? A *sufficiency* of comfortable and wholesome "food and raiment;" reasonable labor; all due attention when sick; support and protection when old and infirm; all needful *religious instruction in youth and mature age*, and a decent burial when dead. Masters give unto your servants these "*just and equal things*," and ye need not be afraid to meet them in judgment.

In conclusion, I will make a few reflections on the great *utility* of practicing the duties, privileges and responsibilities of our holy religion.

1. It is *practice* which proves the truth of our profession to others. "By their fruits ye shall know them." We know that the doctor is what he professes to be when, by his skill and remedies, he cures his patient; so of the lawyer, mechanic, farmer; and so of the christian: we know him to be a good man who *bears* "the fruit of the Spirit;" "fruit unto holiness." The *world* will credit a profession upon such evidence as this.

2. It is *practice* which makes *perfect*. The practical improvement of religion will maintain all that was at first received, and will be the occasion of receiving more; for it is a rule in the economy of grace that, "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance," because he shows both capacity and willingness to improve. Acting upon this rule he will soon become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

3. It is *practice* that *prevents backsliding*:—"for if ye do these things, ye shall *never fall*." "Never fall" from your own steadfastness; "never fall" from the enjoyment of religion: "never fall" into sin, pride, and the snare of the devil: "never fall" into hell. On the contrary, he that cometh to Christ, heareth his sayings, and doeth them, like a wise man building his house upon a rock, shall stand firm and unshaken amid howling winds, descending rains and beating floods, when storms of wrath shake earth and sky; and, soaring above all, "an entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

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"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . . By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotton son, of whom it was said: That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."—Heb. xi, 8, 9, 10; . . 17, 18, 19.

Abram, the son of Terah, was born about the year of the world 2008, or 350 years after the flood. This is supposed to have been but two years after the death of Noah, the faithful preacher of righteousness, whom Terah must have known, and yet, such is man's proneness to forget God, that already the world was filled with idolatry. Even Ur, the land in which the human family had so recently had its second origin, was an idolatrous country—even Terah, it would seem, an idolator. This astonishing fact explains the frequent recurrence in the word of God of the first commandment, and justifies the promptness and severity of the punishment inflicted upon idolators. It shows, also, why it pleased God thus early to select a suitable man to be the special depository of Divine truth, and a reliable conservator of the true religion.

Abram was invested with this high prerogative for the reason, above all others, that he was "the friend of God." No other character is likely to be a public benefactor, "for foe to God was ne'er true friend to man." And of all those who, at that time, were friends of God, he was perhaps the most likely man to subserve the two great purposes of heaven—the illustration and the preservation of the true religion. Through all his known life he both taught and practiced it. Besides, God knew him, that he would "command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do

justice and judgment." For these reasons he was selected to be at once the conservator and exemplar of the true religion—"the father of the faithful." To fulfill this great calling, it was better that he should leave home, since idolatry would seem more revolting to him if practiced by strangers. Accordingly, the terms of his call were: "Get thee out of thy country, and *from thy kindred*, to a land which I shall shew thee." And at the age of seventy-five years, he started, without a murmur or misgiving, carrying with him, besides his servants, Terah, his father; Sarah, his wife; and Lot, his nephew.

Though ordered to no particular spot, the general country for which he was destined was Canaan, the eligibility of which, for the purpose contemplated, is worthy of a moment's notice. It was rich, salubrious, and diversified in its scenery and resources; having land for pasturage, and land for tillage; with enough of sea-coast for useful purposes, but not enough to tempt to a wandering or warlike life. It was also conveniently situated as to the peoples of the earth, occupying a position where three vast continents meet; near the centre, in fact, of the whole eastern hemisphere—the entire known world of those times. Not just *in* the great international thoroughfares, but immediately by them. Within sight of all that was transpiring in the world, yet perfectly retired. An observer of the nations, but in no one's way.

Abraham was not an absolutely perfect man, nor is he represented as such in the scriptures; yet really, if we except the prevarication in his intercourse with Pharaoh and Abimelech, it would be hard to name his fault. He possessed a clear calm mind, and a moral constitution of surpassing strength and integrity. In all the relations of life, as husband, father, master, patriarch, he was a model of manly virtues. But it was his faith which distinguished him above all other men, and it is to some of the more patent characteristics of that faith that your attention will be called in the following remarks.

1. In the first place, it is important to show that it was a *reasonable* faith.

There is an expression in vogue, to the use of which Christians have a right to object. Men speak of a "blind faith." There is no such faith. There is faith, and there is superstition, but the difference between them is not less than the difference between light and darkness. If men will call a prompt, obedient, heroic trust in God, blind, they slander it. Such was Abraham's faith, but it was not

blind—it was reasonable. God constantly supported and reassured him upon every occasion of more than ordinary trial, appearing to him and renewing the promise some nine or ten times. It is altogether probable, also, that the first great promise made him was understood at the time to embrace the gratification of every virtuous wish of a great and good man's heart, together with the imperishable honor of a connection with Christ. Such a promise fully justified the most implicit and self-sacrificing trust in its author.

When he was called to leave the land of his birth and the society of his friends, God did not at first promise him the place to which he was called; he did not describe it; he did not even name it; he only said he would show it to him. But the patriarch knew that it was God who spoke to him; that with such a warrant he could well afford to go anywhere; and that nothing could be more reasonable than such a venture. When it is said that Abraham offered up Isaac, "*accounting* that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," the literal sense is, "he *reasoned* with himself"—exercising the highest faculties of the mind. It was not "a thing incredible with him that God should raise the dead." He walked in the way of God's commandments by the help of a light sufficient to make the path plain immediately before him, and was willing to wait for more till he needed it. For let it be borne in mind that God supplies this commodity step by step, and in no other way. Room is always left for doubt and occasion for trust, else were there no faith. God will force no man to believe. He will give him light enough, but none to waste. Accordingly Abraham went, not knowing whither he went, but perfectly satisfied in knowing his guide.

The term "seed of the woman" was always understood to refer to a Saviour of the world; and whenever that expression was used, the idea of redemption was suggested. There is also abundant reason to believe that Abraham knew more of this doctrine than a careless reader of his history would suppose—more, indeed, than the recorded language of the covenant seems at first to imply. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shined on him in the face of Jesus Christ." Our Saviour says, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, [eagerly desired—leaped forward—to see my day,] and he saw it, and was glad." He knew what the allusion to his posterity meant, and had, therefore, the greatest possible motive to fidelity. Through him—in his seed, "Not," says the Apostle, "seeds, as of many," but

seed—in allusion to the Messiah—"shall all the nations of the earth be blest." Of course Abraham understood this.

When the son was promised, he was, it is true, very old; but God had already made him rich while he was a wanderer, and without any apparent advantages; why could he not also give him a son? After the son had been given, he was required to sacrifice him, and virtually did so; but he "reasoned with himself" that God had given Isaac by miracle, in reward of obedience, and would, if it became necessary, restore him in the same way.

Abraham's faith was reasonable; so must ours be. No man ever had more faith than he had a reason for; and he who most clearly comprehends the nature of Heaven's promises, will repose the most implicit trust in them.

2. His faith was prompt. The faith by which men in all ages have been justified, is a living, active faith. The Bible abounds in precepts as well as promises, duties as well as privileges; and though Abraham was justified before the works of the law—before circumcision was enjoined—it was not before there were commandments to obey and duties to perform. There is no mention of his ever having delayed or hesitated to obey, but many expressions forcibly suggestive of his punctuality. Hagar's banishment was very grievous to him, yet "he rose up early in the morning" to enforce it. He was a very old man when circumcision was enjoined, yet the rite was observed "the self-same day." Nothing could be more shocking than was the commandment to sacrifice Isaac, yet "he rose up early in the morning" to execute it.

His faith was prompt; so should ours be. Few things are so fatal to the prosperity of the soul, as the habit of delaying the performance of an act of duty. The very derivation of that word is suggestive; it signifies something that is already due. The very moment God bids us perform an act, that moment let us do it. Delays are dangerous. Faith is productive of prompt obedience.

3. Abraham's faith was singularly constant. Religion was the business of his life. Wherever he went, he carried it with him; wherever he pitched a tent, he built an altar; wherever God appeared to him, he offered an extra sacrifice. He was very rich, encumbered with a large family, unsettled, in the midst of enemies to his religion; yet he never neglected his devotions, nor permitted his household to do so.

By obeying God he became rich, and so, by being in good company, did Lot become rich. But wealth without piety is sure to be a snare. Hence Lot, who had his choice of localities when he separated from his uncle, preferred the neighborhood of wealth and sin. At first he only "pitched his tent *toward* Sodom," but in a short time he was a citizen. He loitered round the verge of the vortex till it had well nigh engulfed him.

One cannot help noticing in this connection the great danger of prosperity to social concord. The flocks and herds of the kinsmen no sooner became increased than they gave rise to disputes; so that what want and wandering, fatigue and famine failed to do, was easily effected by prosperity. The friends were separated. But the sincere man of God is always safe. Neither the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity could separate Abraham from God. All of Lot's good fortune was the result of his connection with Abraham; insomuch that, "when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he *remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the destruction." The first set prayer upon record is the one offered by the patriarch for the doomed city; and it contains all the elements of christian supplication—an impression of God's majesty, faith, humility, charity, importunity—so that the good man who would not dwell in Sodom, as Lot did, prayed for it, as Lot did not.

His mind seems to have dwelt constantly upon his "high vocation." At Haran he took a house "at the entering in" of the town—on the alert to learn—ready to entertain; an example of piety we should be careful to follow. When in the service of the weak he had taken spoil in battle, he refused to keep or to share it; because that was not his profession. His mind was on other gains: he was true to his calling. "He was not mindful of that country from whence he came; for truly had he been mindful, he might have returned." But "he desired a better country, even a heavenly." When the famine broke out in Canaan, he did not murmur, nor wait for a needless miracle—he helped himself; not by going back to Ur, for he went in a directly opposite direction; yet not to stay, but to sojourn. When stricken in years, he very naturally wished to see Isaac well settled in life, but would not permit him to marry in Canaan. His wife must come of good people, and there were none nearer than Chaldea. Yet he would not go for her himself, nor suffer his son to go, to use his own expression, "whatever might come of it." He would not go nor send

his child where temptation was, not even upon an important errand. He therefore sent Eliezer, his servant, having just sworn him to be faithful. So also, when Sarah died, he would not bury her with the natives; but bought the cave of Machpelah, and buried her alone. By these tokens may we judge of the constancy of the patriarch's faith.

4. But the most remarkable characteristic of Abraham's faith was its fortitude. We have seen what it could do, let us see what it could suffer. Cave mentions fifteen different journeys, and ten sore temptations, which befel him; and in almost every trial he was called upon to face a seeming contradiction, if not an apparent impossibility. Upon reaching Canaan, the land was promised him, for an inheritance to him and to his children; yet it belonged to unfriendly strangers, and he was not permitted to settle, but was required to dwell in tents and tabernacles; while his age threw him far past all hope of a posterity.

But of course, the great trial of his faith was the sacrifice of Isaac. It befel him just when all his troubles should have seemed well nigh well past. He was comparatively settled in life; the long-promised son had been given; domestic broils were provided against; all seemed well with him, and it was "well with the child;" when the command fell upon him like a bolt out of heaven, that he should offer Isaac for a burnt sacrifice. That moment, it may be supposed, every bliss of his life was turned to a pain. He was desolate. Ishmael, poor boy, was an exile at God's command; Isaac was all the son he had or ever would have. The very being whose presence would have nerved him to meet any demand upon his fortitude, was now to be immolated, as a test of that fortitude, under circumstances indescribably revolting. His last prop was to be struck from under him. Ah! no; not his last: he still had for a support his confidence in the word of the Lord. Wonderful faith! Even there it "staggered not through unbelief at the promises of God."

He might have given many plausible excuses for disobedience. He might have called it murder, and shown an antecedent law forbidding it. He might have urged natural affection, and demanded, at least, that some one else should do the deed. He could have required a reason for this requisition. Ishmael was banished for the sake of peace, but what had Isaac done? He might have asked what would become of the promise; or how he should afterwards look Sarah in

the face, or what the heathen would think of human sacrifice among the Hebrews, and whether the cause of religion would suffer by it. But nothing of the sort was said. He neither disputed, delayed nor murmured; but on the contrary, "rose up early in the morning" to execute his dreadful commission.

The requisition was made, it should be observed, in the very hardest language:

"Take now thy son"—

"O God, will not all my flocks, and herds, and servants do, instead?"

"No: take thy *son!*"

"Then at least let me send to the wilderness for Ishmael; Isaac is my cherished child, the son of the wife of my youth—my beautiful, faithful Sarah—the tie that binds us to the days of our bloom. Will not Ishmael do?"

"No: take thine *only* son, Isaac, whom thou lovest. It is to be a trial of love; the question is, lovest thou the gift more than the giver?"

"Enough, Lord, I give him up."

"Nay, but more: take now thy son, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and *offer* him there."

"Alas, must *I* slay him?—pompously, religiously, immediately? Must I do it?"

"Yea, even more: offer him there for a *burnt* offering!"

What a mitigation of the good man's suffering would a sentence of death have been!

In further progress of the narrative, Moses introduces, according to his wont, many of those touches of power, by which, almost at the rate of a volume to the word, he throws the entire picture upon your eye in all its terrible sadness. For example, they were to travel together for three long, dreary days; and then, when near the mount of grief, they were required to leave the servants behind, and proceed alone. Father and son together for such a purpose! It was the fellowship of joy and grief, of love and death. (This occurred near the foot of Moriah: was it the spot afterwards called Gethsemane?) An excuse for requiring the company of the servants could easily have been framed; but no—

> "The menials at a distance wait,
> Alone ascend the son and sire;
> The wood on Isaac's shoulders laid—
> The wood to build his funeral pyre."

The unsuspecting innocence of the son—the face unclouded by apprehension—the voice—the speech, especially his allusion to the absence of a lamb, must have added poignancy to the grief that stung the old man's heart.

"My father," ('call me not father,' flesh and blood would have said, 'but murderer,') "behold the fire, and the wood to keep it burning," (to keep *what* burning?) "but where is the lamb?" No doubt the father thought he saw the lamb, in that young and trusting face.

"My son:"—Dare he call him so? Ah! yes,—he never loved him more; and never but one father loved a son more than he. "Jehovah jireh—the Lord will provide." So he did then, and so he did near two thousand years afterwards on the very same hills.

The patriarch had erected many an altar in gladness and in hope; he nows builds one in sadness. And having finished it, turns to the subject of his anguished thoughts, and breaks the matter to him. "My son, thou art the lamb!" Isaac was perhaps twenty-five years of age—old enough at any rate to have thwarted his father's purpose, but this was to be a voluntary sacrifice—an adumbration of the sacrifice to be "offered once for all." He knew his father's hope, and had been trained to obedience.

The first duty was to bind him—to tie the arms which had so often embraced him; the hands he had so many times seen spread out in pure and innocent devotion; the next, to take a farewell token from lips that never murmured. Thus far the father: now rises the awful priest, the majestic "friend of God,"—lays his left hand on the pure young forehead, takes up the gleaming knife, looks to heaven for one more supply of strength, then at the smooth breast for the palpitating seat of life; his lips close more tightly, his chest expands with a breath of desperate purpose, his muscles swell, the right arm rises! There—hold there, for a space, O grand old hero! Let heaven and earth behold the sublimest act of obedience ever performed by man! It is a spectacle for men and angels: the gentlest and best of fathers, in that attitude over his heart's darling, and "Sarah's laughter!" Another such spectacle will not be seen for near two thousand years, and never but one more.

This was God's opportunity: he does everything in due time. He had more control of that imminent arm than the patriarch had; and at the point between the will's perfect obedience, and the execution of its purpose, he called to him: "Abraham, Abraham!" and the lofty man answered: "Here am I!" Lo, what force his position gives these words: "Here am I"—in the most desperate emergency to which duty ever called a man—obeying, with every fibre of my heart on fire. "Behold *here* am I!"

"Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do him any harm: for now I know that thou fearest God, seing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." I meant thee no harm, but only good. That is enough, "to obey is better than sacrifice."

At this point, God confirmed his reiterated promises by an oath, saying: "By myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

It is more than merely possible that this is the point from which also the patriarch saw the day of Christ. It may be, that as the words of this great obligation were finished, the rugged landscape melted out of his sight; the hum of human life—the roar of a mighty city—rose over the hills upon which he stood; and there lay Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, like a jewel in the bosom of Palestine. Music, pure as light and sweeter than perfume, floated through the ambient air. The harp of Isaiah sang the story of the *manger*, that of David the story of the *cross*. He saw Israel in her strength and glory; he saw the glory fade, the strength decay; tribe after tribe shrinking toward the enfeebled centre; till the land of their fathers was a despised and conquered province. But, lo! across the hill, there, above a stable in the suburbs of the meanest town in Judea, God has hung the morning star of hope—a herald of the brightest day that ever dawned. Beneath that wretched roof lies an only-begotten and well-beloved son, whom it has just been Isaac's immortal honor to represent.

> "Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining,
> Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall!"

But that infant brow will ere long wear the diadem of the universe; that dimpled arm sustain a sinking world. He has come to lead captivity captive, to conquer death, to despoil hell of its hopes, and reopen the gates of Paradise!

The vision may have been extended, till it embraced the accumulating conquests of the cross—the millennial day—the resurrection morn—the gathering of the redeemed myriads to the gate of light.

For this is by eminence the day of Christ, and it is fair to suppose that Abraham saw it.

It has been objected that the sacrifice of Isaac excites too many feeling; that the feeling it excites is wrong; that the patriarch's faith was ferocious, his piety cruel; that religion should recognise no such duties, and encourage no such thoughts.

Cain may have entertained a similar opinion of Abel's sacrifice. The elder brother's offering was beautiful; it consisted of the blushing, golden, dewy fruits of the earth. The younger brother slew an innocent creature, and placed it reeking upon the altar. The former act was a proud man's offering—a mere acknowledgment that his wishes were gratified; the latter was the sacrifice of an humble, penitent heart, whose faith admitted that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

The transaction now under consideration was a scenic representation to Abraham and to us of something infinitely more moving. And if it be asked why the object of the sacrifice was not at once explained to father and son, it is obvious to answer that the scene was meant to be affecting—to move the feelings of all whose guilt and vanity will permit them to feel; to show how dear a price it cost to buy a soul from death; how deep the obedience and humiliation to which Christ bowed his neck. It was meant to give as lively an idea as possible of the amazing love of God, who, not at the command of a superior, or the call of friendship, but while we were yet sinners, spared not his only-begotten, his well-beloved Son, but freely gave him up to sorrow and death for us all.

The whole narrative is as faithful a representation as prophetic act could well be, of the Eternal Father offering the Adorable Son. The place was the same, the sacrificer a father; the sacrifice an only son—an unoffending and willing victim; the son was received back by a figure of the resurrection; the place was called, by way of prophetic promise, Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide. Isaac bore the faggots, as Christ bore the cross. The entire scene forcibly reminds us of the world's redemption, and furnishes a beautiful explanation of the words, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not require; a body hast thou prepared; lo! I come to do thy will."

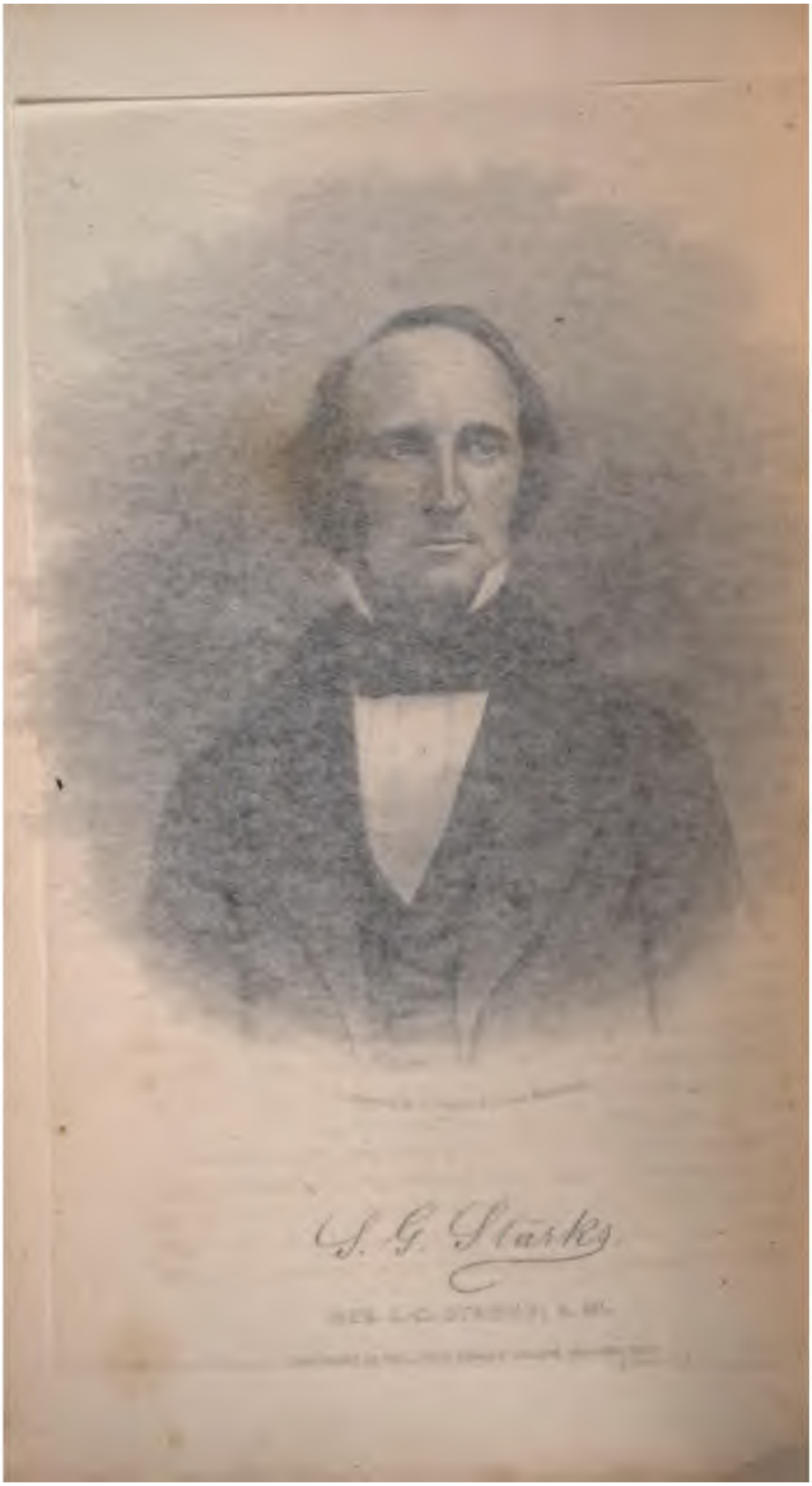
Men will call this act of Abraham by such names as suit them—a display of iron nerve, of heroic fortitude, and the like—but it was an exhibition of unconquerable faith—faith which the hurtlings of all

heaven's thunders and the shock of a thousand earthquakes could not stagger. That faith had reached the sublime height at which it became an absolute and settled understanding with its possessor, that whatever God did, he would do him no harm, but always good; that, whatever befell him, nothing should ultimately hurt him; but, on the contrary, all things should work together for good to him. Such a faith was his support in this great trial. He accounted that God was able to raise his son, even from the dead. He reasoned thus with himself: I may stab the life out of that young heart; I may rob the glory from eye, lip, and limb; may drown the music of that pleasant voice; may burn that youthful form to ashes,—but God can give my son to me again! He can collect the wreathing smoke to glossy curls; the sparks to beaming eyes; make lips of eloquence of the ruddy coals; and bring looks of love and life from ghastliness and death!

Such was the eminence attained by Abraham, through an unflinching trust in God. But let none suppose that it was his exclusive privilege to occupy that position. We may all obtain "like precious faith." If we do not, it is our own fault. And O, brethren, when we consider that the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and that even in the comparatively-benighted days of the patriarch, "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward," with what earnest emphasis should we ask, "How shall *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Abraham was now permitted to rest and prosper, till twelve years afterward we find him sitting in his wife's tent, whither he had gone (as the Scriptures express it) "to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." She had been the beautiful companion of his youth in far-off Mesopotamia; the faithful sharer of his toils and wanderings; she was the mother of Isaac. Honored woman, to have such a mourner at her bier.

Finally, about the year before Christ eighteen hundred and twenty-one, Abraham himself gave up the ghost, at a good old age. He had lived one hundred and seventy-five years, during an entire century of which he had been a wanderer. Now had he found the long-sought rest; the "stranger and pilgrim on earth" had reached the heavenly country;" his eyes beheld "the city which is out of sight, whose maker and builder is God."



J. G. Starks

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

BY REV. S. G. STARKS, A. M.

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"—Acts xxvi, 8.

How precious are the words of promise! and so much the more, as the heart is clothed in sadness. How full of interest and heavenly consolation does that record appear which speaks to us—to all—of a better life, when the life that now is is ebbing to a close! Then it comes to pass, if not before, that heaven gains audience on earth, and man is wont to heed the counsels of his Maker. Then it is that every doctrine and precept of our holy religion appears to assume a new and increased lustre, and to speak with an unwonted energy and power to the hearts of the children of men; in a word, that a new song has been heard in the temple.

And shall we inquire for the cause? Has any fresh impulse been imparted? Has any new star been seen burning on the brow of the future, or any new message come down from the Holy One? By no means. The very same light and influence which are now seen kindling on the altars and thrones of revelation, have crowned its every page and paragraph from the beginning. That peculiar interest with which Christianity seems invested in such an hour and on such an occasion, is made manifest from the fact that man is now inclined to look with a "single eye" on the "truth as it is in Jesus"—to consider his ways, and to ponder the path of his going. It is now that his ear, so long closed to all good, is open to instruction; and his eye, so long fastened on earth, is uplifted to heaven, where the cross from the first pointed his vision, and labored to plant his affections.

Whenever Christianity finds such a spirit and temper of mind as this enthroning the affections, how complete are the triumphs of faith, how blessed the results of obedience! Then, every word of revelation is heard and heeded, embraced and adored. It is no longer viewed, as heretofore, to be a matter of minor importance, but as the

one and only source of life and hope, joy and immortality. Happy would it be for man if in every period of his life there were the same marked anxiety to know and obey the will of God as that which characterizes the close of existence. And of reason; for so varied as are the conditions of earth's sorrowing children, so varied likewise are the voices of revelation. There is a sentiment rich and full for every condition, from the cradle to the grave. That Infinite Wisdom whose ear is open to the cry of the raven, and whose eye is on the flight of the falling sparrow, certainly has not been less mindful of man and his wants; nor has He failed, in the bright revelations of His will, to manifest His care and tender solicitude for our race. Revelation, therefore, by Divine appointment, rejoices with those who rejoice, and weeps with those who weep. The law and the gospel, Sinai's thunder and Calvary's hymn, conspire together to promote man's present and eternal good.

In view, therefore, of the many deaths among those we love, over which our holy christianity teaches us not to sorrow even as others who have no hope, and of our own approaching dissolution, may we not fondly hope that the theme of our present meditation will be regarded as appropriate and highly suggestive? In the great and momentous question before us, touching the resurrection of the dead, revelation speaks with an air of commanding triumph, and yet, at the same time, in strains as sweet as the "song of love." Blessed words! swift-winged messengers of light, bearing joy and gladness to the habitations of mourning and distress.

The text is truly inwrought with glorious hope in reference to the dead, and the final overthrow of the kingdom of death. We may well and with much assurance contend, that there is nothing which so universally calls forth and enlists the sympathies of our race as that momentous question, the question of all ages and climes, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Shall the sleep of the dead have a waking, and the silence of the grave be broken by a song of the resurrection? Who is there that is not interested—vitally interested—in the solution of this great problem? Nor is it wise in man to turn away from or push aside this fearful question. He has too much at stake to think either slightly or seldom on this subject. Nothing is more fully calculated to arouse and impress man with a due estimate of life's untold interests and issues, its facts and fallacies, its brevity and uncertainty, than the hopes and fears of a coming future. How often

is it that, in the contemplation of this subject, the Christian, the true disciple of Christ, is made to rejoice through hope, "knowing that the day of his redemption draweth near;" and many who are out of Christ are induced to "turn their feet into the path of His testimonies."

Probably no other subject of thought or inquiry, in the vast range of the human intellect, has more fully or more deeply penetrated the souls of men, and of all men, than the doctrine of a future state whether there is, or is not, an hereafter; whether all life terminates at the hour of death, or whether beyond the grave there is a renewal of existence. As to the general sentiment of mankind, but few—very few, comparatively—are found to doubt. Notwithstanding the absence of a written revelation in many portions of the earth, and the consequent moral darkness which shrouds the nations, still that great truth, revealed by God in the garden of Paradise, nearly sixty centuries ago, that man was to inherit immortality, has not been entirely lost nor forgotten; but, being invested with immortality, it has lived on in glorious remembrance, rising superior to Eden's wreck and ruin; and to-day, as in the beginning, though in greatly diminished splendor, it still burns in every human heart, and kindles an undying glory in every human hope. It has wandered on through every tribe, and nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, until its testimony is found in every land and under every sky, from the dwarfed Greenlander to the giant-grown Patagonian, and from the dweller in Oriental climes to him whose home is at the setting sun.

Everywhere man reaches forth his arms to embrace a future. However marred and disfigured, materialized and sensualized, the heavenly pencillings of immortality may be and are, nevertheless the great primal fact stands out in bold and living colors; nor have the clouds of ignorance and superstition, nor the howling storms of ages, been able to extinguish this celestial light, or hush the song of its triumph: it lives on still and forever. In fact, the great future forms part and parcel of every system of religion under the sun: it is incorporated in every language under the whole heavens: it is symbolized in fact and fancy, in budding life and in smouldering hecatombs, in rolling clouds and in purple floods: everywhere and in everything man strives to read his future and his rest. The sun-tanned children of the woods, as they wander among the wild pomp of their mountains, rehearse it in their legends of distant smiling seas and islands of green. The polished and erudite Greek proclaims it in his classic

tence, the preface of a history burdened with the epochs of eternity, where is the wisdom in man's spending all his energies, and living, and toiling, and striving simply and alone for this life, whilst every object of trust and treasure on which God has stamped the impress of merit and immortality is above him, in the regions of man's promised existence—a land undimmed by clouds, unshaken by storms?

And here the question naturally arises, What use, what improvement, should we make of this universal and well-attested faith of mankind? Does it not bear the signs and seals of the Divine glory? and if so, can we doubt the issue? Will it not most assuredly be fulfilled? Hath the Almighty spoken, and will He not bring it to pass? Hath He attracted the gaze of all nations to the unfolding future, and will He not reveal that future in the annals of eternity? Is the racer to reach no goal, and the vessel no port? In a word, is the divinity in man to expire in the agonies of death, and the voyager to eternity to be stranded, and lost, and go down, and forever, "into the caverns of a sunless sea?" Great God! is this to be the destiny of human hopes, and the final issue of those glorious promises and prophecies which have come to us from the Divine throne! By no means: heaven has inspired no false hopes, nor has the Almighty kindled a meteor glare on the brow of eternity. The eternal sun floods with prophetic daylight the valley of death, and already the voices of holy watchmen are heard on the summits of intervening ages, "Behold, the morning cometh!" "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead!" Nor is this blessed hope of a coming future found simply in the faith of those who enjoy the advantages of revelation. God has written it in all nature: it "lives in all life, and extends through all extent." If so be, then, that the nations of the earth, having no other apparent light than that of nature, have stood out beneath the opening heavens, and in the profound and unmeasured abysses of space, reaching away to the throne of the Eternal, have gathered hopes of a home and residence in the altitude of boundless spheres, what may not our exultant songs be, who have received the Divine pencillings of that invisible future, in whose sky the Star of Bethlehem has shone like an undimmed glory, and from whose very tombs have been heard the thrilling shouts of triumph?

At this point, however, lest we be misapprehended in our argument, we would most explicitly and unequivocally state, that all we

have said as to the universal belief of all nations in a future state of existence, as read in nature, taught in the schools of philosophy, or rehearsed in their sacred groves, has reference simply and only to the soul—to man's spiritual existence. As to the body, the visible and tangible part of man's nature, what was to be its destiny after death formed no part of this theory, at least in relation to the hoped-for future. At the hour of death, the body was supposed to have met and fully accomplished all the designs of its organization and being; and, consequently, it was consigned to no higher and nobler destiny than that of hopeless dissolution and decay. Even the soul's immortality was regarded, more especially among those who sought the teachings of philosophy, as hypothetical, and grounded on what they were pleased to style "the eternal fitness of things." Philosophy in its best estate, and encouraged by the longing desires of the multitude, and receiving its all of inspiration from the natural instincts of man's nature and the floating strains of Eden's prophecy, ventured only to teach the immortality of the soul: that there was an invisible and intangible something in man, which would survive the ravages of death, and wing its mysterious and invisible flight to higher and nobler regions, or to lands of deepest gloom, as its moral affinities might determine. When this much was said, all was said that lay in the region of their philosophy. Knowing of no future for the body, they spoke not of its resurrection or redemption. Their brightest lamps were instantly extinguished as they sought to penetrate the arcana of the grave. They saw no prophet standing on the borders of the valley. They heard no rushing winds of immortality gathering over the millions of the slain. All was silent, and dark, and incomprehensible, and consequently they pronounced death eternal. And yet, however imperfect such a system is, and more especially when contrasted with the hopes of Christianity, and whatever of gloom settled upon the grave in the belief that death was an eternal slumber, nevertheless we can but rejoice that our kindred in every land and nation have not entirely lost the hopes of a future state, and the belief that virtue will be rewarded and vice punished. But, rejoice as we may, what would be the effect upon us, upon enlightened Christendom, if the hopes of the resurrection were cut off; if the Star of Bethlehem were to go down in darkness; if the story of the cross should be reversed, and the "shoutings of harvest" be heard no more? Alas! alas! what an Aceldama! what a wail of woe would be heard in our

land! As little as we may regard it, it is nevertheless true, that he who seeks to blot out the hopes of the resurrection, not only plants himself in battle-array against the truth of Jehovah, but at the same time shows himself to be in league with death, and sealing with approbation the heartless work of the destroyer! But, thank God, there is a Power high over all; a Power which in the fulness of time shall send earthquake, and overthrow the thrones of primeval darkness; a Power which shall be heard, and felt, and realized in the resurrection of the dead, and the utter confusion of those who "obey not the gospel of the Son of God!"

With whatever of confidence the world has held to the doctrine of a future state and the immortality of the soul, it is scarcely necessary to repeat that it was left for Christianity, and Christianity alone, as taught in the "living oracles," to reveal and make manifest the sublime mystery of a resurrection. To Christianity belongs the immortal honor of kindling hope in the bosom of despair, and of pouring a flood of eternal daylight on the grave of humanity. It was Christianity speaking in the first promise after the fall; Christianity tenting among shepherd-kings; Christianity in the Tabernacle and in the Temple; Christianity rejoicing in the hymns of priests and singing on the harps of prophets; and, above all, Christianity as embodied in the person, character, and teachings of Him who was revealed from heaven as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," which "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Christianity was that almighty arm revealed from heaven, which rolled back the dismal clouds from the mouth of the grave, and that Divine hand which traced in characters of flame, on the very arches and columns of Death's shadowy throne, "Jesus of Nazareth, the resurrection and the life."

That the doctrine of the resurrection of the human body is purely a subject of Divine revelation, is most fully attested by the universal history of mankind. That it is in advance of all human reasoning, and superior to the loftiest conceptions of the imagination, is at once most fully sustained by the universal silence of all history and poetry, ethics and philosophy, on the subject. Christianity, therefore, in the statement and advocacy of this new and startling doctrine, not only assumed a high and regal position, but at the same time stood solitary and alone, clothed in the awful grandeur of its own divinity. It had no ally but Omnipotence, and no investments but the high behests of

Heaven; and consequently, whenever its voice was heard and its pleadings manifested, whether in the Temple or in the Tabernacle, in the forum or in the field, in Jewish or in Pagan lands, "Jesus and the resurrection" was the burden of its song and the hymn of its triumph. As proof of this, we refer to the position taken by St. Paul, when he uttered the memorable language of the text. Nor was it the theme of this only, but of every other occasion on which he spoke in the name and for the cause of Christ. It will be remembered that, two years previous to this interview, the Jews had lodged complaint against the apostle of "sedition," as it respected both their government and their religion. He was consequently arraigned before Felix, and impleaded by Tertullus. And although "no cause worthy of death or bonds" was found in him, nevertheless, Felix, on being removed from office, to please the Jews, left Paul in chains. On the arrival of Festus, the new Governor of Judea, he found the apostle in bonds at Cesarea. King Agrippa, coming as far as this place to do court to the new Governor, and learning from him the state and condition of the apostle, and that he was under arrest on account of his religious opinions, signified his desire to hear him himself; whereupon Festus appointed the audience on the following day. "And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth," attended by the soldiers who kept guard.

What a spectacle of the moral sublime was there here displayed! In the midst of pomp and royalty, titled chiefs, and earthly nobility, and all the insignia of grandeur and state, the chained apostle for the honor and cause of Christ makes his appearance. Calm and self-possessed, with a Divine impulse in his heart and the glory of his Master in view, and realizing in himself a divine unction and the baptism of fire, he began and finished one of the most triumphant and overwhelming arguments in defence of the Christian religion, and the glorious assurance of the resurrection of the dead, to be found in all the Book of God. Nor was his appeal in vain. As he called up prophet after prophet who had spoken of Christ and the "power of His resurrection," and arranged and stationed them around the cross and at the sepulchre, and made them repeat their ancient and honorable predictions in reference to the sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension of the Prince Messiah, and then and there pointed out

their literal and eternal fulfillment in Jesus, the "son of Mary, the Son of God," every heart was riven as by the bolts of heaven. The actual tragedy of the crucifixion and the resurrection, of the cross and the sepulchre, was being reënacted in the minds of that awe-stricken multitude, when St. Paul moved towards the king, and, lifting his chain in the sight of his royal auditor, exclaimed, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" The appeal was irresistible; and at once the king responds, giving proof of the soundness of the apostle's argument, and an honest conviction that Christianity was true, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Why, then, O King Agrippa, "why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"

This was Paul's only crime, and herein was found the whole of his offence, that he preached the doctrine of the resurrection, and set forth Christ as its author. And yet there and then he most triumphantly demonstrated that to the same glorious hope "the twelve tribes, who instantly served God, day and night, hoped to come;" and "for which hope's sake, (exclaims the apostle,) King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews." In view of the Almighty energies embarked in the work, "why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Can any man show reason, or science, or philosophy, or aught else to disparage the faith in God's ability to raise the dead? That the same Almighty Power which in the beginning made man out of the dust of the earth, cannot and should not, in His own good time and pleasure, raise up the fallen tabernacle of humanity, and adorn and beautify it, spiritualize and glorify it, and crown the whole with an investiture of immortality and eternal life? "Can man conceive beyond what God can do? Quite impossible." We may well, then, rest secure in the immutability of His word, let that word pledge or promise what it may.

And here we would examine more critically the immutable and eternal basis on which the apostle founds his faith and builds his argument in favor of the doctrine of the resurrection. He appeals not to the philosophy of the schools, for there was no light in them; he calls not to his aid the prejudices or sympathies of the multitude; he rests not his argument on the musty records of the past, nor on the fancied systems of the present; but, as a wise master-builder, he lays his foundation and piles his superstructure amid the attributes of God. On the "stone which the builders rejected" he rears the

hope-tower of his faith, and, taking his point of survey from this lofty and glorious elevation, and beholding in the coming future the heralding-star and the dawning light of God's promised morrow, he exclaims, with an air of conscious triumph, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Here the apostle, in plain and simple terms, states the ground of the Christian's hope, which hope rests on the promise that God will raise the dead, and the ability to redeem the pledge. The doctrine of the resurrection is set forth most emphatically as the work and prerogative of God, and of God only. No other power, or combination of powers, can effect it. He, and He alone, who made man, can redeem man. "An angel's arm can't lift man from the grave;" and when God speaks, "Legions of angels can't confine him there." In the mind and counsel of Jehovah, the resurrection has actual existence; His eye as certainly rests on the triumphs of the last great battle as though every child of mortality this moment stood before Him; but to us the event is future. But when the final hour shall arrive, the transcendent glory of the resurrection is as certain to be revealed as that God exists and immortality endures. In view, therefore, of the almighty resources embarked, why should we tremble to convey our kindred to the dust? Who does not recognise the reasonableness and Divine assurance of the doctrine, in that the hand of God is set to the work, and the honor and veracity of the Eternal Throne is fully and faithfully pledged to its consummation?

And yet, as full of hope and heavenly consolation as this doctrine is to man, there are many, even in Christian lands, who have denied its authority, and labored with a zeal worthy of a better cause to effect its overthrow. Not, it is presumed, from antipathy to the doctrine itself, simply and abstractly considered, but from the fact that it is a great foundation-principle—a basement doctrine of a system of religion which they despise, and despise only because it reproves vice, and threatens punishment to the finally impenitent. Although the cherished mode of attack is not by a direct charge, seemingly, that God has not power to raise the dead, yet impliedly it is none the less bold and presumptuous, in this, that God has counterworked the ability to do so. The argument is based on what infidels are pleased to style the "immutability of the laws of nature." It is contended that God is the builder of nature, and the author of her laws; and to this every Christian will most heartily subscribe; but

the deduction drawn from this fact by the infidel, namely, that "nature's laws are immutable—incapable of alteration or change, even by God himself," we do as heartily deny. This objection, taken in its most favorable bearings, must at once be pronounced, not only fallacious, but highly presumptuous. It is in no sense logical, nor can it stand the slightest test of criticism. It is neither more nor less than an artful mode of evading the subject, rather than an honest consideration of it. The position assumed by the apostle in the text, and that too in perfect harmony with every other inspired writer, touching the resurrection of the dead, is not in any sense, either intimately or remotely, founded on nature or her laws, but solely and entirely on God. If the word of God taught that the resurrection of the human body were to be effected, in whole or in part, by nature and her laws, then the objection, whether true or false, would have at least a degree of relevancy, and an expression of candor. But as neither nature nor her laws are called into effect, or in any sense to aid in this work, but the whole is reliant on God and God only, no objection can lie against the doctrine as set forth in nature. We assert—and the proof is abundant—that no valid objection can be found in or urged from nature, unless it can be shown that an effect is greater than the cause which produced it, which no one but a madman or fool will allow. What is nature but an effect of which God is the cause? Which then is the greater, nature, or God, the author and builder of nature? But if there be, as contended for, any law or element of nature which can or will prevent the resurrection of the dead, then God must be held as inferior to nature, and is consequently overmastered by the works of his own hands. Can anything be more absurd than such a conclusion as this? And yet this is the logic and criticism with which infidelity strives to overturn the sublime and glorious hopes of the Christian!

What is law, either human or Divine, natural or revealed, that it should be held in such profound veneration, on this subject, by those who are constantly violating it on all others? Is it anything more than an ordained "rule of action" or "mode of existence?" It is not an agent, but an instrumentality; the express or understood will or pleasure of a superior, single or multiplied. Law, in itself considered, is purely passive: it is not in any sense existence itself, but simply a mode or means of existence. The idea, therefore, that the element of "immutability" is an inherent or natural

quality of law, urged by those who oppose the doctrine of the resurrection, is a most arrogant assumption, and destitute of any foundation. Immutability of right belongs to God, and to Him only. If in the counsels of Infinite Wisdom nature has been constituted on a plan or principle of regularity, or, if it is preferred, "immutability," it is subject to the will of God, and in no particular can it be shown to be independent of Him. As all immutability, as an original quality or mode of existence, is of God, and can only be imparted or bestowed by Him, it is at once evident that nothing is or can be immutable or unchangeable, contrary to His will; and can only so long remain immutable, in its relation to other modes of existence, as the Divine pleasure shall bind the investment. Although it may be admissible and rational to speak of the "immutable and unchangeable laws of nature," when referring to simple created causes and agencies, and of their ability to alter or amend, yet when reference is made to God, the author and builder of nature, the terms are inadmissible and unmeaning. That God cannot (as contended by those who deny the resurrection of the dead on the ground that the immutable laws of nature forbid such an occurrence) alter or change the laws of nature, (if necessary,) to effect the resurrection of the human body, is too absurd and ridiculous to demand a refutation. In fact, the entire argument of infidelity, if it is to be styled an argument, is nothing more nor less than a pure sophism, in this, that the attempt is made to prove that the regularity in nature is one and the same thing as the "immutability" of nature. That nature is regular, or at least seems so to us, is at once admitted; but that it is "immutable" is most positively denied; nor is it in the power of any man to establish such a fact!

Intimately connected with this error in doctrine and sophistry in reasoning, on the part of infidelity, is found another, none the less objectionable. In fact, errors in doctrine or practice scarcely ever exist alone. The assumption that, because a thing now exists, it will forever exist, or that, because it does not now exist it never will exist, (which is scarcely more than the former argument in another form,) is not only an unwarranted assumption, but is at the same time contradicted and proved false by every agency and instrumentality in God's moral and physical universe: and of reason we affirm, that the simple fact of the existence or non-existence of mutability or immutability, when made to depend on God as an absolute and independent

cause, relies solely on His will and pleasure. Planting ourselves, therefore, on this immutable basis, we conclude that the fact that the resurrection is not now—to-day—taking place, and the dead are not seen rising up and walking forth out of their graves, furnishes no more evidence that they never will arise, than does the existence of man—to-day—that he will never die. The argument is as sound in the one case as in the other, nor can the conclusion be successfully resisted. That men have lived and then died, is a fact requiring no array of argument; equally true is it that those who were dead have been raised to life again by the power of God—that same power which stands pledged for the resurrection of all. These two great facts, death and the resurrection, are sustained by the same style and character of evidence; nor can the one (except in frequency of occurrence) claim any real advantage over the other. This may seem at first a strange if not a hazardous position; nevertheless, we feel confident that facts will bear us out. Take the case of Jairus's daughter, or the widow's son, or Lazarus—either one, or all of them —and there were as many, if not more, present when Christ raised them from the dead, and who saw and conversed with them after their resurrection, as ever beheld any one die, or followed him to his grave. The fact that but few have been raised from the dead has no relevancy to the validity of the argument; nor can the world reasonably look for the general resurrection of the dead until the period of general probation closes. Revelation indicates each period as distinct and successive, and not as both existing or transpiring at one and the same time. The simple fact that God has given promise to the world that He will raise the dead, is and should be a sufficient and an all-sufficient ground for our faith; and yet He has done more, and because of our infirmities has abundantly demonstrated the doctrine by raising to life some of those who were dead, which fact is sustained by the testimony of friends and enemies, by sacred and profane history. These, at least to the eye of faith, stand up as prophetic sheaves, typifying the general harvest.

The studied effort on the part of infidelity to array nature against revelation in the doctrine of the resurrection, is entirely unfounded and disingenuous. Nature and revelation are not opposed to each other, but the rather, when wisely considered and justly interpreted, proclaim the one and self-same language. Both teach the doctrine of periodic succession and harmonious progression. Everything in the

moral and physical universe has been ordained and established on regular and successive periods of time and fitness; and, consequently, no two events, epochs, or periods, in the regular order of nature, providence, or grace, are found existing at the same place and time: in a word, God has everywhere and in all things revealed himself as a Being of order and not of confusion.

To illustrate and strengthen this position, we need only refer the mind to the period when God alone existed; when there were none with him in the universe; and then there followed another period when the creative fiat went forth, and the silence of eternity was broken by the harps and hymns of angels. There was also a period when no firmament lifted its fretted dome of azure and gold, and no system of worlds revolved through "voids immense;" and then again there was another period succeeding, when the gloom of ancient night fled away before the blaze of innumerable suns and sparkling stars. Now, with these beautiful illustrations and proofs drawn from nature, the accredited record of infidelity itself—relative to the order and harmony of the works of creation, both spiritual and material; of period succeeding period, and of creation following in the train of creation; we must naturally, and with the fullest assurance of reason, conclude that, with the accumulated light of a thousand prophecies burning in glorious fulfilment on the ages of the past, and kindling with a Divine assurance on ages yet to come, instead of nature or her laws placing any barrier in the way of a resurrection, it does in fact not only illustrate, but at the same time confirm and establish it. How forcibly are we taught that the present is the period of death and the power of the grave, but that succeeding this there is to come another period, which shall prove the period of life and the power of the resurrection! As, in the order of creation, the "evening" preceded the "morning," so, in the order of redemption, death and the grave precede life and the resurrection. If, in the triumphs of Calvary, death has prospectively been "swallowed up in victory"—in which event the resurrection of the human body is reliant on God, then it is as certain in due time to come forth, as if this very day and hour the song of the resurrection should salute our ears, and the earth be felt trembling under the mighty tread of its buried generations.

As far as the light of nature and revelation combined have enabled man to read the mighty volume of creation, and the glory and sub-

limity of its constitution and laws, it has been found to reveal but one grand series of elevations and progressions. In fact, God never works on a retrogressive scale. His every sketch of wisdom and touch of power is always and forever to improve and perfect, to beautify and adorn. Whatever, therefore, there is or may be found contrary to this great elemental principle, either in nature or man's present state and condition, is and must be pronounced foreign and antagonistic to the Divine government. We may therefore with boldness assert that death and the grave are no more of nature, as God originally constituted it, (at least in so far as man is concerned,) than they are of heaven. They are the offspring of sin, and the just retribution for the violation of God's law. God made the world an abode of life and an Eden of pleasure, but by transgression it became the habitation of death and of countless evils. Every triumph of death over humanity, and every grave dug in the bosom of the earth, are but the visible footprints of the destroyer. God, however, in the great and glorious plan of human redemption, has pronounced the doom of death, and the restoration of his captives. As the grand mission of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, was to counterwork the powers of darkness, and to bring back what was lost by the defection of the first Adam, death and the grave are as certain to be overthrown, as that God is mightier than His enemies. Whatever, therefore, infidelity, or pseudo-infidelity, may assert to the contrary, one thing is certain—one unfailing edict has passed the throne, that God will vindicate the honor of His injured law, and sustain the rectitude and perfection of His universal government. And when this shall have been fully accomplished, death and the grave shall be piled in ruins at the foot of the cross, nature restored to its pristine purity, and Paradise bloom in unclouded beauty.

Such we conceive to be the overwhelming evidence of nature, as unfolded in the light of revelation; not as now existing, in death and graves, but as it shall hereafter exist, when redeemed and disenthralled, and when the hands of the Crucified One shall pronounce the second benediction upon it through the power of His grace. This sublime prophecy, however, is only clearly and distinctly enunciated, at present, in the volume of revelation. Nature itself, as it now sends out its multitudinous responses, is most emphatically a Babel, a land of confusion. In one section there is manifest the budding of hope, whilst in another there is revealed the blight of despair. In one

moment the ear is regaled with the song and shout of life, whilst in another it is torn and riven with the fearful wail of death. And what does all this mean? Has Infinite Wisdom thus ordained and established confusion and contradiction in His own government? By no means. "God cannot deny himself." All His acts and works are necessarily perfect in harmony and degree. The confusion and contradiction which are so apparent to all, are the works of an enemy. God sowed "wheat" in the fields of existence, but an enemy hath scattered "tares." Such are the present conflicting and jarring elements of nature, that no man or class of men are now or ever have been able, independent of the light of revelation, to satisfy themselves as to the great original laws of life and being. If so, why is it that so many countless systems have perished with their authors? Why is it that even now long-established and cherished theories are seen trembling on their ancient foundation? Is it not because God's original laws written in nature have been so mutilated and disfigured that no system of philosophy can fully decipher them and read understandingly the record? In view, therefore, of such a condition of things, God has, in tender compassion for our race, spoken to man through His revealed word; and it is through this medium alone that man can arrive at any satisfactory conclusion in determining what constitutes God's will and pleasure towards our world. Here, and here only, can man learn what is of God, and what is the result of sin; what is in conformity with, and what is opposed to, the Divine government. With this Divine record in the hand of man, flashing its immortal fires over the wastes of time, he learns of the power of a resurrection; that death shall be destroyed; that the grave shall be opened, and that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake and come forth;" and that life "immortal and the same" shall one day live and reign in glorious triumph.

Whatever, therefore, may be the trembling suspense of the world or the cavils of infidelity, in reference to this marvel of revelation the resurrection of the dead, matters not as to its full and final completion. God has settled and established it as His own will and work that the dead shall awake and come forth to newness of life; and no power shall be able to resist it. To give to this momentous subject the strongest possible hold upon the human mind, God has declared it to be His own peculiar work and pleasure. He has not intrusted it to any agency or instrumentality, but reserved the accomplishment

of the mighty enterprise to himself, and consequently placed it beyond the possibility of doubt, chance, or change. If the resurrection of the dead had been predicted as the result of second causes; if nature, or man, or angels had been spoken of, there might and would, doubtless, have been a withholding of confidence; but when God reveals His own almighty arm, and stakes the honor of His throne that He will raise the dead, who can doubt the issue? Infidelity itself, with all its assumed composure, trembles before the announcement, and actually calls upon the "rocks and the mountains" to shut out the light of revelation, and shield the trembling consciences of its votaries from the "face of Him who sitteth on the throne." Here, thank God, the soul may find repose. Here the mourner may hush his griefs and still his sorrows. Here, on this tempestuous ocean of time, lashed into foam and fury by the wild hurricane of death, the voice of Jesus lingers still; and in the calm of dissolution, as the vessel bounds over the dark waters, faith walks with steady step the deck of those eternal promises that God will raise the dead—that "they that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The various other objections urged by infidels against this doctrine, and founded on the imaginary idea of opposition in nature, are in fact but of minor importance. The controversy on the doctrine of "personal identity" and the "revolution of particles," even among those who cavil, is in fact but little relied on. These floating visions of infidel sophistry may allure and deceive for a moment, and more especially those who strive to weave a "cloak for their sins," but when it is remembered that no respectable infidel writer has ventured to base his theory on so slender a trifle, but simply held them as collated for want of something better, we may well pass them by without any formal refutation. The theories foreshadowed, although urged against the resurrection of the human body, are in themselves as much, if not more, opposed to nature, and to every system of civil jurisprudence throughout the world, as they are to the doctrine of the resurrection. We may in truth affirm that the immutable and eternal basis on which the doctrine of the resurrection has been placed in the Word of God, leaves all objections without foundation, and utterly harmless. Nature, the great volume with which infidelity assumes to be so conversant, is as little comprehended by those who speak so confidently of its God-built laws as are the words of revelation; and if it were not that its marvels were every day and everywhere

rising up in life and beauty around us, would be as certainly condemned by those who oppose the resurrection as any doctrine of Divine revelation. How prone is man to forget that God's ways and modes and plans are not only ordered in all things and sure, but infinitely wise, and, in innumerable instances, beyond the mightiest conception of the mightiest minds! But were it possible for every objection urged by infidels to bear, as set forth by them as found in nature, against the resurrection of the dead, (which is by no means true,) still God could and would as certainly raise the dead as his own word has been pledged to the work; and in so doing God would be restoring his law and vindicating his sovereignty. Were the particles of the human body scattered to the utmost limits of infidel conjecture, and, in addition, "immutability" be stamped on every law of nature, (admitted for argument's sake,) yet God could as easily and as consistently raise the dead as he now gives life to vegetation and fragrance to flowers. And of reason; for death is not a law of nature; it is the result of sin; and sin had no existence in this world when God ordained and established its laws, and pronounced everything "good" which he had made. Death and the resurrection, therefore, both lie outside of the original constitution of nature. But should infidelity object to this theory, then every infidel is reduced to the fearful necessity of contending that God is at war with himself, and has set up opposing laws in his own government; that with one law he ordains life, and with another law destroys that life; that with one hand he builds up, and with another hand pulls down; and, furthermore, that these two laws—the law of life and the law of death—are both "immutable," unchangeable, and eternally the same. Alas, alas, for the fearful logic of those who set themselves in opposition to the Word of God!

Let us not forget that God is consistent with himself; that none of his plans or laws or governments have been ordained or set up in confusion; that God's periods are of a moral character, and not of days and years; that with the Lord "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" and, consequently, that it is because of man's infirmities that he measures and maps off time. Whenever, then, the great period of probation shall close, and the reign of death end, then shall be ushered in the period of life and the resurrection; and then (thank God) He who in "the beginning" called matter into existence, and out of a sea of chaos built up and adorned

the innumerable chambers and dwelling-places of universal being, will as certainly raise the dead, and out of the widespread chaos of u crushed and blighted humanity reconstruct the human body, suited to its new and future relations, and, upon the indestructible principles of rejuvenescence and immortality, place it forever beyond the possibility of chance or change.

Such are some of the analogies of nature in reference to this sublime and heavenly doctrine; and although the Christian faith neither looks for nor claims from the great world around us any evidence or proof confirming the doctrine of the resurrection, still there is much which, in the light of revelation, serves to typify and illustrate it. Most certain is it that every effort has most signally failed to find anything in nature to disprove it. Infidelity may wrest the language of nature, as it most certainly does that of revelation, to its own destruction, and final and eternal overthrow, but still nature, like a great physical prophecy, is rolling forward to final completion and a glorious end—a period when its stammering tongue and broken accents shall be eloquent with the praise of God, and triumphant in the vindication of his word.

To this word of revelation we now turn our attention, and gather from the rich munificence of its grace the evidences of the doctrine under discussion. And here we find the doctrine of the resurrection most clearly stated and abundantly established. With the Church of God the resurrection is no novel theory. It is no new mine sprung in modern times, or forged out in the brains of speculative theologians, but is venerable with the age of God's first promise, and has ever, from the beginning, been recognised and embraced in every dispensation of the Church of God. Although it was but dimly shadowed forth in earlier times, when compared with the overpowering splendor of later ages, nevertheless there was always light sufficient to arrest the attention and inspire hope, to prevent the seal of destiny from settling on the brow of death and the gates of the grave.

Enoch doubtless understood this doctrine when he "walked with God" and communed with his Maker; and although his translation was not strictly speaking a resurrection, it was in fact a most splendid realization of it, and served as a most beautiful type to the nations present and to come, that there was a future for the bodies as well as for the souls of men. Abraham was fully instructed in this great mystery when standing on the summit of Mount Moriah, and bending

over his son — his only son — bound for sacrifice; and although restrained from actual immolation by the arresting voice of the Divine Angel, nevertheless (says an inspired apostle) "he received Isaac from the dead in a figure of the resurrection." How well this great truth was recognised by Job, may be fully comprehended by his own language. Listen to the sublime *proem* with which he introduces his testimony: "O that my words were now written!—O that they were written in a book!—that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!" Could anything be more beautiful than this? But hear his testimony: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another, though my veins be consumed within me." What testimony could be more full and explicit than this? How sublimely does the harp of David send out the following language: "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave." "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." How beautifully does Isaiah set forth and establish this doctrine in those sublime odes and songs with which he celebrates the praises of the Prince Messiah: "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for the dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." In fact, nearly all the prophets more or less clearly shadow forth this glorious doctrine, and point out some new star of hope burning in the sky of the future, to keep in remembrance this great truth, that "the dead shall arise."

Here we might safely rest our argument as to the Old Testament Scriptures: and yet we can scarcely forego the pleasure of introducing one other illustrious character, in the person of Elijah. This holy man of God, exercising his prophetic office midway between Eden and Calvary, a translated Enoch and a rising Redeemer, had not only been signally honored during his stay on earth by the answering fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and by being entrusted as it were with the very keys of heaven, by which to shut up the chambers of the dew, and at command to unlock the treasures of the clouds, but more—he had likewise read the visions of a future, and beheld the dead starting into life before him by the power of God, as a living prophecy—an abiding witness—that death was in the plan of redemp-

tion a conquered enemy, and the grave a chamber of temporary repose. But that chapter in his history which most effectually arrests the attention of mortals is the story of his translation. Elijah having passed out from the city of habitation—having entered the valley of the Jordan, and passed the water-floods—ascended in a celestial chariot, and was borne aloft amid the sublime wonders and temple habitations of the heavenly world, leaving another bright example of the power of faith, the awards of holiness, and a glorious demonstration of an invisible and ever-unfolding future for man's physical as well as spiritual existence.

Such are some of the evidences in relation to the knowledge of this sublime doctrine in "olden times"—years when creation was young, and the memorials of Eden lived in the memory of man. Whilst numerous other passages might be cited from the Old Testament Scriptures to the same point and proof as the foregoing, yet, holding the above to be amply sufficient to sustain the correct sentiments of the ancient worthies, we now turn our attention to the New Dispensation, and walk out under a sky radiant with the "Sun of Righteousness," and over a land actually rent and torn by the power of a resurrection. In making our selections, however, from the New Testament Scriptures, we scarcely know where to begin. So replete is the entire volume, and so convincing and overpowering are the demonstrations given, that to collate all that is appropriate would result in but little less than the reading of the record. Whilst the four evangelists were chiefly concerned in writing the history, and in giving to the Church and the world a true narrative of the advent, life, ministry, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of "Jesus of Nazareth," they at the same time, and in the same connection, make the most full and ample references to the general resurrection of the dead. Nor could they have done otherwise, when their Divine Lord and Master, both in His public and private ministrations, in the audience of gathered multitudes, and alone with His disciples, gave the most direct and convincing proofs that the period was approaching when "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of God, and come forth." In this connection Christ most emphatically proclaimed Himself "the resurrection and the life;" and not only so, but He gave proof of this great fact, and settled forever this momentous question, in that He raised the dead in His own name and power, and finally came up himself from the silence of the tomb, to the con-

sternation of his enemies and the joy of his friends. The great burden, however, of the Evangelists' triumph and hymn of joy was, to celebrate the resurrection of Christ himself; His victory over death; His triumph over the grave; His spoiling of principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly; His leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; and His glorious ascension into the heavenly places, with all the essential attributes of man's nature, spiritualized and glorified, as the first fruits of that mighty harvest of redeemed humanity which shall be gathered, in the fulness of time and the fruition of glory, into the home and rest of the sanctified and saved.

However full and convincing may be the testimony afforded by the four Evangelists in proof of the resurrection, still, if possible, the writings and ministry of the apostles are more full and ample. The reason of this will at once appear, when we consider their fields of labor, and the gross darkness which shrouded the minds of Gentile nations. The mission and ministry of Christ, according to ancient prediction, (in so far at least as His personal labors were concerned,) were to be exercised in the land of Judea—the house and home of the prophets, the earthly inheritance promised to Abraham, the nation out of which Messiah was to rise, and to which He was to appear; a land made sacred by God's temple, and in which Christ was to stand; immortalized by its sacred mountains, crowned with cedars and waving with palms. The Urim and Thummim, the altar and incense, the types and symbols, and all the ministration of Divine heraldry, were there; and there Christ made His advent, and taught, and suffered, and died, and rose again, fulfilling both the Law and the Prophets. In this land the doctrine of the resurrection was held as an article of religious faith; but in the great field which opened up to the apostles, "white and ready to the harvest," the doctrine of the resurrection was an unrevealed mystery.

The commission which Christ gave to His disciples was of the most extensive character: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." In the execution of this godlike plan and labor, the apostles of necessity ventured on lands where no Law had revealed its thunders, where no prophet had told of the glory of Messiah's reign, and no hymn of redemption had ever been sung. In such lands, lying on the borders and in the "shadow of death," all had to be made known and proclaimed, and republished at every

interview and on every occasion when the apostles spake of Jesus and the resurrection. In the very beginning of the apostolic ministry, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the manifestation and approval given by heaven in confirmation of their Divine and holy mission, and of the sublime verity of the doctrine, was in very deed one of the most splendid and overwhelming miracles found in sacred story. In accordance with the command of Christ, the apostles held their first conference in the city of Jerusalem. Here, on the very theatre where the tragedy of the crucifixion had been so lately performed, in sight of Calvary and the cross, the garden and the sepulchre, crowned with cloven tongues of fire, they preached Jesus and the resurrection; and there and then, three thousand of those who had so lately clamored for Christ's crucifixion cried out for pardon, and embraced the cross.

From Jerusalem, the city of holy memories, the city of Christ's humiliation and triumph, the apostles, "being endued with power from on high," took their departure to publish, in every land and nation whither they should go, Jesus and the power of the resurrection; and "their words were with power, for God was with them." Stephen, in Jerusalem, puts to silence and utter confusion the combined wisdom and subtlety of the synagogues of the libertines, and those of Cyrene, and Alexandria, and Cilicia, and contends, even unto martyrdom, that the "same Spirit which raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies," and enthrone them at His own right hand in heaven. Philip, in Samaria, confounds and overwhelms the sorcerers and magicians, and moves to anxious inquiry the whole city, in reference to the doctrine of the resurrection; giving assurance unto all that "the dead shall be raised incorruptible: for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Peter, in Cesarea, in Pontus, in Galatia, in Bithynia, in Cappadocia, and wherever he went, preached with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, giving proclamation and proof of the resurrection, in the conversion of the people, and to as many as heard him, that "if they believed that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Barnabas, in the cities of Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, sent consternation and alarm to the hearts and consciences of listening thousands, who beheld the miracle-attested

evidences that "God would raise the dead, and bring every work into judgment; that the hour was coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Paul, at Berea, and Corinth, and Philippi, and the world-renowned cities of Athens and Rome, and the idolatrous Ephesus, and wherever he went in the spirit and power of his mission, gloried in the cross, and triumphed in the sepulchre. His arguments and demonstrations were like mighty avalanches sprung from the Rock of Ages, and thundering down the heights of Calvary, overwhelmed sages, and philosophers, and heroes, and statesmen, and camps, and courts. Like another Divinity walking amid the earthquake of the crucifixion, and bearing on his shoulder the "stone rolled away from the door of the sepulchre," he dedicated to Jesus of Nazareth the altar inscribed "To the Unknown God:" he heaved the very foundations of Diana's temple; he drove to madness the craftsmen of her shrine; he committed to the flames the thousands of their magical books; and, standing in triumph in the crowded Areopagus, he established and defended the cross, and piled at its base the diadem of Death, the broken bars and shattered gates of the grave, and proclaimed the day of God's appointment, "in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." James, and John, and Timothy, and Titus, and a host of others, sent out on the glorious mission of the world's conversion, went everywhere proclaiming the one all-heavenly theme of the resurrection of the dead, and the coming in of a morning which shall shed down on the night of the tomb the radiance of immortality and eternal life, and reveal to the gaze of an astonished universe the returning captives, triumphing in the song of the bursting sepulchre: "O Death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" until, at last, the transcendently glorious apocalyptic vision, descending from God out of heaven, burst upon the gaze of Patmos' isle, and closed the scene.

And here is the kindling of a glory too intense for mortal vision. We may not, we cannot, sketch the unfoldings of this inspired drama Who can adequately portray the evening of time and the dawn of eternity? Ages of investigation have walked among these divine symbols, and gazed on these last links of prophecy, and yet how little does man comprehend them! nor can he fully, for they bend too near the throne, and speak in the language of glory. And yet this much

we may know, that these sacred signs are hung upon the cross as trophies of conquest; that the multitudes of angels which surround the throne and bow before the altars are witnesses of the resurrection; that the tramp of the celestial horses and the thunderings of the rolling chariots proclaim a pilgrimage to the sepulchre; that the heavenly armies are pushing forward the triumphs of Calvary; and that, pressing hard upon the evening of the world and the setting of time's last sun, they already burn with ecstatic delight to celebrate with harp and hymn the new creation in Christ Jesus.

Like a second Moses, who typified the coming Redeemer, and was chosen of God to narrate the sublime wonders of the first creation, so St. John, the "beloved disciple," who so often leaned on the Saviour's bosom, was selected to sketch the diviner glories of the spiritual creation, the closing periods of time, and the opening epochs of eternity. Far down the unfolding future, and standing as it were on some angel-tower, which overlooked the roll of centuries and the flight of time, he beheld the opening of seal after seal, and heard ever and anon their prophetic thunderings proclaiming the triumphs of the cross and the final conquest of the world, the overthrow of Death, and the resurrection of the dead; when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," as the voice of the archangel sounded out amid the thrilling notes of the trump of God, creation ceased its roll—the power of death was broken—the slumber of the grave was disturbed—the generations of the dead awoke—and far and near, over land and over sea, earth and ocean, there were beheld uprising millions walking out over the boundless fields of space, arranging and stationing around the descending throne, height over height, and order over order, and lifting the bold anthem on the tongues of unnumbered generations, "Jesus reigns—He reigns victorious!" "Alleluiah! alleluiah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

O my God, may our voices and the voice of our departed brethren at last unite in this glorious song! Blessed be God, and blessed be His holy name forever, for the promise of a resurrection, and of life eternal after death!

As proof of these high-born and heavenly hopes, that our kindred shall arise, and that we ourselves shall come up from the last resting places of humanity, St. John testifies that he "saw the dead"—so near did he stand on the confines of that glorious day of God Almighty—that he actually saw the dead. "And I saw the dead,

small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

It is enough: God has declared it, and coming ages shall reveal in glorious perfection His every word and promise; and those whom we now mourn as dead shall stand living witnesses of the power of the resurrection. Why, my christian friends; why, my weeping brother and sister; "why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Nor is it; for your faith and trust is in Him who raised the widow's son, and who will as assuredly raise your dead to newness of life.

"O happy dead, in Thee that sleep,
While o'er their mouldering dust we weep!
O faithful Saviour, who shall come
That dust to ransom from the tomb!"

Henry M. Lee

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF SELFISH WEALTH.

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"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke xii, 21.

A profoundly interested crowd were listening to the gracious words that proceeded from the mouth of Christ. They were agitated by the solemn warning to fear Him who hath power to kill and to cast into hell;* and were excited to a grateful joy, by the assurance of a special and merciful Providence, which supplied their daily wants, watched over their steps, and "numbered the very hairs of their heads."† But their eager attention was suddenly and strangely interrupted. There was one among those who listened to him, who "spake as never man spake," whose thoughts were too much engrossed by "the love of money," to sympathize with the doctrines of Christ, or to be attracted by his representations of "a better and a more enduring substance" than earth can offer, or wealth can purchase. He had no taste for those spiritual treasures which Christ was offering "without money and without price" to himself and others. But he was keen to perceive the authority with which Christ taught, and the deference with which he was heard; and quick to conclude that he might avail himself of the authority of Christ to accomplish a selfish purpose of his own. The things that filled his heart and excluded Christ from his thoughts and affections were displayed when, lifting his voice amid the solemn stillness of the multitude, he said: "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."‡ Disclaiming all right or power to judge or settle questions of that character, the Master warned him against covetousness; and taught him a lesson, with respect to wealth, that he, and others in the pursuit of riches, find it hard to believe, and are slow to practice: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for

* Luke xii, 4, 5. † Verse 6, 7. ‡ Verse 13.

a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* How true! How wisely, how impressively true is it, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions! Life has a better and a more enduring substance than "gold that perisheth!" It has higher aims, nobler promptings, and more substantial objects than are found in the pursuit or the possession of wealth. "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."† The dangerous tendency and destructive influence of the love of money on the hearts and habits of men are distinctly portrayed in the parable connected with the text.

To confirm his warning against covetousness, and to illustrate the deceptions and hardening influence of the disposition and determination to be rich and increased in goods, he related a parable showing the effects of wealth upon one who "layed up treasure for himself," and was not, either in the possession or use of his wealth, "rich toward God." Our text is a deduction from the parable, setting forth a general principle, as to the effect of selfish wealth on religious life and character, drawn from a particular case. It is the history of a man who made to keep; who accumulated to lay up for himself; who labored to have, not to give; who was anxious to get and glad to hoard; but not cheerful to communicate nor willing to distribute; who was rich for himself and poor toward God; who was wealthy for the life that now is, but a pauper for that which is to come! *As* he was, "*So* is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The parable furnishes ample and authoritative proof of the evils of seeking wealth for its own sake, and of laying it up for pride and selfish pleasures. Its various and impressive facts for warning and instruction may be comprised in the following propositions:

1. *The influence of the pursuit and use of wealth for selfish purposes, on the character and destiny of men.*

2. *The remedy against the evils of accumulating riches suggested by the duty of so using our wealth as to become "rich toward God."*

I. The influence of the pursuit and use of wealth for selfish purposes, &c.

Recurring to the parable for illustration and proof of the evils at-

* Luke xii, 15. † 1 Tim. vi, 9.

tendant upon the selfish pursuit and use of wealth, we find that it blinds the mind, hardens the heart, inflames the passions, perverts the understanding, and damns the soul. A frightful catalogue of evils, consummated in eternity, and crowned with fire that never shall be quenched. Let us hear and heed the warning.

It is, perhaps, not an insignificant fact that the case used for illustrating so important a principle as the consecration of one's wealth to the service and glory of God, is taken from agricultural pursuits and profits. From any other of the professional and industrial pursuits of life it might have awakened the suggestion that the successful accumulation of wealth was connected with chicanery and peculation, the growth of skillful trickery, professional mendacity, or of fraudulent transactions pervading a thousand operations, and spreading over a long tract of time. But nothing of the kind enters into the subject. It is a case where the man and his pursuits are segregated from corruption and trickery, are subordinate to providence, and face to face with God. Man the worker and God the blesser occupy the vision and fill the thoughts. These work together. The munificence of God crowns the toil of man, and he is rich! But alas! he is rich without an emotion of gratitude, an impulse of benevolence, or even a desire for fellowship with him who crowns labor with increase, and life with blessings. In these facts, defining the influence of selfish wealth on the character of "a certain rich man," we find authority for our proposition, and support it by the following deductions plainly set forth in the parable.

1. Wealth sought and used for selfish ends blinds the mind as to the author and end, no less than the right use of wealth. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." He was already rich. The successive products of years had brought him wealth. It was not ill-gotten wealth. It had grown by God's blessing upon the skill, and care, and industry of the husbandman. He plowed and planted and sowed. God gave the genial seasons, summer and winter, sunshine and rain, seed time and harvest; and his stores were continually augmenting. The direct agency of God's providence is constantly displayed in such a case of prosperity. It is more palpable and impressive here than in any other mode of growing rich. But this rich man seems wholly unconscious of the source of his success. He does not recognise the kindness and love of God. The *gift* absorbs his thoughts, fills his vision, engulfs his

affections: the Giver is ignored, selfishly excluded, practically repudiated: God is not in all his thoughts. He may not have magnified his own thrift, his prudent foresight, his indomitable energy and perseverance. But neither, on the other hand, does he acknowledge God, confess his providential goodness, feel, or even suspect, his dependence upon Him whose sun and rain and air cause the earth to bring forth her fruits in their season. In the vastness of his possessions; in the diversity, variety and abundance of his goods, in the full hand, the satisfied heart, the confiding trust of wealth, he is "without God in the world:" alone with plenty; rejoicing in the harvest, but stupidly unconscious of the prolific goodness of the Giver of fruitful seasons. He has toiled for wealth, and he has it. Poor as he is in all things else, he is "rich and increased in goods." He has a God, but it is gold: he has a temple, but Mammon sits enthroned in its high places; and the melody of his worship is the rushing tide of increasing prosperity. But, rich as he was, he was "not rich toward God." He knew that he was "rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing" that wealth could furnish; but he knew not that, with all his boasted wealth, he was toward God "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Such is the sad picture of a rich man who lived and labored to "lay up treasure for himself." But it has darker shades, and the gloom increases as we proceed in the analysis.

2. Wealth sought for its own sake hardens the heart against the duty of benevolence towards men. "And he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"* &c. The barns which had sufficed to preserve the products of preceding years were inadequate for the protection of the plenteous harvest of this fruitful season. He must, therefore, to preserve the fruits of his industry, have larger storehouses. He resolves to pull down his barns, and build larger ones—spacious enough to receive and retain all his fruits and provisions. In the desire to preserve his goods, there is nothing to be censured or condemned; the sin of the act consists in its selfishness. He intends to take care of his goods—that is right; but he does it only for himself—that is wrong. He never loses sight of *himself* and *his* goods. God is forgotten, the poor are forgotten; the good that wealth might do, the hearts

* Verses 17 and 18.

it might gladden, the moral wastes it might make, "to rejoice and blossom as the rose," enter not into his thought, form no part of his plans, have no place in the uses to which his wealth is to be appropriated. What cares he for these, or God? He says, These are *my* fruits, *my* goods, *my* provisions; my hands have gotten me all this wealth. May I not do what I please with my own? Whom shall *I* consult? God?—the poor?—the cause of benevolence? In that case, my present barns would hold all they would leave me. No, none of these; Self is my counsellor. I and selfishness will settle the matter. *What* shall I do? *I* will pull down, and *I* will build up, and *I* will bestow my goods in a place of safety. Here is a combination of arrogance, selfishness, and pride—the legitimate fruit of godless wealth—enough to make those who "*will* be rich" pause in their cause, and tremble for their salvation. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" He was laying up treasure for himself. His *present* was as blissful as heart could desire. He had much goods—enough for the long years that were trooping towards him, like the swelling symphonies of coming music. His *future* was gorgeous with a protracted career of unruffled repose, luxurious living, and splendid merriment. But the portrait of this rich atheist is not yet filled up. A master's hand traces the image on the canvas. Another stroke, and it grows more luminous and perfect.

3. Wealth sought and used for selfish purposes deceives and damns the soul. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."* The selfish passion for wealth seldom tolerates self-indulgence, and less frequently indulges in sensuality It is generally too exacting for the one, and too avaricious for the other. In this graceless rich man, however, they all meet and harmonize, and combine to form a character which Inspiration only can describe, and which "pure and undefiled religion" contemplates with humiliation and sorrow. In purpose all his plans were settled: his larger barns were built, and his abundant harvests gathered into his spacious storehouses. He now passes into the future. A long line of years stretches out and away before him. He has much goods laid up for each of the many years that are coming to meet him. Heretofore he labored; henceforth he will rest. He forgot God in the getting; he will not think of him

* Verse 19.

in the using of his wealth. He laid up for himself; he will enjoy it alone. His aspirations are bounded by his possessions; his anticipations range within the years and luxuriate among the scenes of feasting and merriment for which he has provided. Soul, these are thy goods, thy gods; enter into thy rest; sit down to the feast and the bowl!—eat, drink, and be merry. Pause not, nor spare; thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Soul, take thine ease. The long years of toil are ended; the anxious thought for to-morrow can disturb no longer. The diligent hand, the daily thrift, the nightly care, the ceaseless vigilance, have met their reward in boundless wealth! To keep, economize, and enjoy thyself, is henceforth life's business and recompense. Take thine ease, soul—eat, drink! Crowd thy table with the choicest and costliest delicacies; clothe thyself "in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;" give a free rein to appetite; revel in the lusts of the flesh;—whatever passion suggests wealth can supply;—eat thy fill of dainty food; drink at every fountain of pleasure! Soul, be merry; put away sadness; call for the daughters of music; join in the song and the dance; bid care be gone; hush the voices of the past; live to-day; and let to-morrow be as to-day, and much more abundant! Thou hast much goods; they will last through many years to come. Eat, drink, and be merry!

Such was the dream of a sensualist, foolish with wealth, and frenzied with the desire of anticipated pleasures. But the dream perished, and the vision faded and passed away at the rebuke of Him before whose word "riches take wings and fly away;" or he who for them forgets God fades as a leaf, and dies in the strength of his days, and in the magnificence of his possessions. While the dream was at its height—in the midst of his gorgeous imaginings, with his plans ripening, and his soul counting on long years of pleasure here, and reveling through their ample rounds of ever-coming, ever-changing joys—a voice awoke his soul! It was God that spoke! And, oh, how terrible were the words, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee! Then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" "So is he," in character and feeling, in doom and destiny, "who layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God."

II. *The remedy against the evils of accumulating riches suggested by the duty of so using our wealth as to become "rich toward God."*

A compound object is comprised in the history set forth in this parable. It contains a solemn admonition against the sin of covetousness, and it suggests the end for which wealth is given, and the uses to which it is to be appropriated. It warns against laying up treasure for its own sake, and for our own exclusive use. It teaches that wealth is a gift of God, and is to be used for his glory, and for the good of our neighbors. In its proper use, we make "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," become rich toward God, and lay up treasure in heaven. The case of the rich fool is presented as a warning against the follies and vices to which inordinate love of money leads its votaries. He stands as an example of the sin and punishment of selfish wealth. If we would escape his doom of damnation, we must avoid his course of crime and folly. The wealth God mercifully confers must be gratefully received and rightfully used. In all respects, as to the reception and use of wealth, the parable is eminently suggestive.

1. Wealth is a gift of God. Wealth is a relative term, of common use, but indefinite in meaning. The world's idea of wealth, as to amount and uses, we discard, as it enters not into our present object. We occupy christian ground, and present christian ideas, for christian objects. In this view wealth consists in the ability to do good as opportunity offers and means allow. Besides, it comprises the idea of power to work that we may have wherewith "to give to him that needeth." If we are destitute of means and have no ability to work for means, then only can we be excused from giving. St. Paul prescribes it as the duty of a converted thief, "to labor, working with his hands that he may have to give to him that needeth."* Thus making it a rule of christian life to give a portion even of the hard-earned fruits of daily labor as a consecrated offering to the christian doctrine of doing good to our neighbor. Wealth, in the christian sense, then, is not measured by the amount of our gifts, or the ability to give largely, but by the ability to give something, and the disposition to give as God hath prospered us, and to give willingly and cheerfully. The ability, the spirit, and the obligation of this law of christian life are happily combined in a sentence of the disciple that Jesus loved, and whose spirit so beauti-

fully reflects the life and doctrines of the Master: "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him."* The principle is this: the possession of the means of relieving, or of contributing something towards the relief of the needy, involves the duty of giving. He who hath the means, whether limited or in profusion, has wealth, is able to give, and is under law to Christ to give according to his ability. The ability to give, that constitutes the wealth in the case, is the gift of God. The use we make of this wealth displays "the riches of our liberality" as signally in the gift of two mites, as in the offering of thousands of gold and silver. God giveth us richly all the means by which wealth is required. The head that plans, the energy that executes, the arms that work, the hands that gather, have their foresight, patience, perseverance, and success from God. Wealth inherited, the emoluments of trade and commerce the fruits of professional skill, the gains of daily industry and protracted toil, all come from God. His providence turns all to wealth, and transmutes honest labor into gold. Whoever plants or waters, projects or executes, plans or works—He giveth the increase. It is, therefore, a duty first in order, and of grave importance to the successful prosecution of all our efforts to accumulate, to recognise God, to confess our dependence upon Him, and to importune His blessing upon the work of our hands. Besides, there is a mode of increasing ability to give, which is the true christian idea of accumulation, too little understood, and too seldom practiced by christians. Christ's prescription for growing rich is by promptness and fidelity in giving: "*Give*, and it shall be *given* you." A doubting philosophy transposes and perverts the doctrine and rule of Christ. It says: we must get and give: get first, then give: get enough to give largely, then give largely: get much, and give in proportion to our gettings. All such reasoning is vain and vicious. The command is clear, the rule positive, and the promise infallible. Give and receive: for if you "give it shall be given you." The rule of christian life is to begin by giving. The amount is not stipulated that is to go out from us; but the return is certain, and the increase abundant. Give, says Christ. Give something, give according to your ability. It may be but little you have to give: give the little. Let those who are able

* 1 John, iii, 17.

give the more, to supply your lack, if more be needed. Be only careful to give of a ready mind, and do it cheerfully: God loveth a cheerful giver. Giving, you will grow "rich toward God." Give to every one that asketh you, to every good cause: the command is *give*: the amount is "according to your ability." Means are not lost, but increased by giving. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." Giving scatters. God multiplies his mercies as we obey him by giving. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, shall it be measured to you again."* This is a new mode of "increasing in goods." It is not by pulling down our barns and building greater, that we may have room to bestow and keep our plentiful harvests: it is not by absorbing all the gains of trade into our business, for the enlargement of trade and the multiplication of profits: it is not by investing our surplus capital in profitable stocks: but it is by riches of liberality, giving to do good, growing rich toward God by the right use of our means, that we are multiplied in all the resources with which God rewards and enriches a cheerful giver. This is the only true, satisfactory, and authorized mode of laying up treasure on earth and in heaven. It commands the appropriation of present available means to present objects of necessity or benevolence; and God assumes the place of debtor to the giver, and pledges grace, mercy, and truth, to repay a hundred-fold in this life, with eternal recompense in the life to come.

But wealth, in the sense here presented, as comprising the power to work, "that we may have to give;" and giving as a means of increasing the amount of our wealth and the ability to give at the same time, is not the precise idea of the parable. It is offered as a sound religious sentiment, suggestive of duty, and soliciting practical experiment of all who make the necessity of daily toil an apology for inability to give. It is commended to our faith, and secured by heavenly promises.

2. Wealth is a talent entrusted to us for usefulness; and for the right employment of it we are responsible to God. "The Lord maketh rich "† His providential agencies fill the barns of the agriculturist,

* Luke vi, 38. † 1 Samuel ii, 7.

prosper the plans of the merchant, crown the industry of the mechanic. His world has wealth for each, for all, and forever. Sea, and earth, and sky, are full of His treasures; and invite all, who to prudence and sobriety add industry, economy and energy, to come, appropriate, and grow rich. But creation is not filled with treasure to stimulate cupidity, to gratify pride, or to pander to lust; nor do all equally participate of the munificent provision. Ignorance, infirmity, misfortune, and sin, hinder many from competency, and subject them to want and suffering. Poverty is a heritage, for good or evil, from which humanity will never be free. "The poor ye have always with you." The Lord maketh poor. But poverty is representative. Christ was poor: He had not where to lay his head; and friendship, affection, and faith, supplied His daily wants. The munificence that fills the world with wealth, the providence that guides and prospers humanity in the search for it, and fills the diligent hand with riches, taxes success with the first fruits of its increase; and claims *a tenth* at least, as tribute money for his treasury, and a proof of fealty to his government. This obligation to give, of *giving* "according as God has prospered us," is absolute and universal. It binds all; excuses none. It is a law of life, sanctioned by Divine authority, and, like the tree of life girt about with the flaming sword, it is fenced round with words of warning, and voices of vengeance, crying woe against every transgression and disobedience. "How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall eat your flesh as it were fire; ye have heaped treasure together for the last days: Thou fool: this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" Selfish wealth is a crime against God and society; and a curse to him who lays up treasure for himself. It is never a virtue, but always a crime; never a blessing, but always a curse. It expels all the sympathies and charities of christianity from the soul; it solidifies "the milk of human kindness" in the breast; it dethrones God from the affections, and elevates Mammon and Moloch to the throne of authority and worship; and having begun by debasing, it ends by devouring the soul in destruction and perdition.

3. Wealth derived from God is to be consecrated to his service and glory. Wealth, whether regarded as an actual possession, or as

ability to give, may be held, enjoyed, and used, so as to render us "rich toward God:" and this constitutes the true riches. A comprehensive outline of the duty, and of the modes by which our means are to be used on earth so as to make us rich toward God, and lay treasure laid up in heaven, is thrown off by the Apostle in words fragrant with the unction of heavenly wisdom, and musical, as if the angel singers had come a second time to sing, not the opening, but the consummated triumph of the reign of peace on earth and good will to man. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do *good*, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* The sentiments of the Apostle are a commentary, exegetical and practical, on the words of Christ—"rich toward God." Means distributed in good works are not wasted, not lost. The alms, no less than the prayers of Cornelius, came up as a memorial before God. How grateful was "the blessing of him that was ready to perish" to the heart of the ancient patriarch: and how sweet to his soul was the song that widowed hearts sung for joy in his path! The inscription on the tomb of a charitable man happily illustrates and urgently enforces the duty of consecrating our wealth to God. "Here lies Publius, who transported a large fortune to heaven, a sum of money, and has gone thither to enjoy it."

4. Wealth laid up for selfish uses and sensual gratification, in violation of the ordinances of God and the rights of humanity, [illegible] curse. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: The seductive and baneful influences of the love of money in perverting the thoughts, sensitizing the affections, and debasing the noble powers of the soul, are forcibly portrayed in the parable of the rich man. His contemplations are wholly and solely of the present world, and he [illegible] of the future; and in the midst of the pomp and luxury in which he lived as in wealth, and the splendid decorations of his tomb and the sober acquiescence of an unmoved [illegible] mingled their charms and

* [illegible]

folded their wings to eat, drink, and be merry, at tables crowded with sumptuous fare, and fountains ever flowing and always sparkling with pleasure. He was in the bloom and freshness of life, counting on long years of pleasure, with ample provision for each as it came and went. But, how abject and poor, in the profusion of this world's good. His mind had no God; his heart no worship, his soul no eternity, his hope no treasure. He was alone: rich, selfish, and a fool! "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." How full of horror to such an one is the startling announcement: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee!" How much more horrifying still, to him who is rich for himself, the demand: "Then whose shall those things be which thou has tgathered?" Yes; whose shall they be? Poor man, wretched man, ruined man, the announcement and the question have shivered thy hopes, the vision fades from the mind, the wealth falls from the grasp, the soul is transpierced with a thousand sorrows; and of all he had, all he loved, all he desired, "there remaineth nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." This is his position. It is not what he wished, but it is all he deserves. So is he; so will he be, "who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Covetousness merits the rebuke it receives in the parable. It is always and only evil; a sin against God, a crime against society. The rich and selfish sensualist is the type of a class: a representative of an innumerable company who love money for its own sake, and for the license it gives to the lusts of the flesh. It is an easily besetting sin, delusive in its approaches, strong in its enticements, corrupting in its influences, and destructive in its issues. It is the only sin in the catalogue of transgression that by a strange perversion of feeling, or a stranger disregard of the Word of God, is held to be not incompatible with the christian profession. Hence, it is as pervasive and glaring in the pews of the Church, as in the places of more worldly resort. It is arraigned by God as guilty of the gravest of sins, and classed with the most offensive of sinners. Covetousness is idolatry; and idolatry is treason against God. It dethrones God. It usurps his place in the affections. It deifies gold. It is a rapacious worshipper of Mammon. Covetousness fraternizes the money lover with the impure and impenitent both in the nature and punishment of their crimes. Association with the covetous is prohibited to

a christian.* He cannot be a christian, since a christian may not eat with him. Inspiration, with a pencil of light, defines his true character and destination by association. He is one of a vile and vicious crowd, grouped together in a companionship of guilt, and marching to the damnation of hell. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor *covetous*, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."† Look at that picture, ye money lovers! It is drawn by the Holy Spirit. He places the covetous arm in arm with the thief and the drunkard, in the centre of the most offensive and loathsome group of depravity and corruption that can be found this side the world of woe; and together they are journeying, not to the kingdom of God, but to the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

Take heed, and beware of covetousness!

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*1 Cor. v, 11 †Verse 9. 10.

RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE.

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"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."
—2 Peter i, 5.

This whole passage deserves attention, as a beautiful and comprehensive description of the virtues of the christian character. Here is a sacred chain, with link after link, commencing with "faith" in Christ, and closing with "charity," the greatest of all. Here is the progressive development of a holy character, where trait after trait becomes visible, and grace after grace appears. I call this the great christian motto. It deserves to be written in letters of gold, and placed where it will always attract attention. It should be committed to memory, and so often thought upon as to influence the life, and conform the character to its standard.

The Apostle begins thus: "And besides this"—intimating that there is something more. There is no degree of grace, no position in religion, no height of enjoyment, where we may not hear the voice of God saying, "And *besides this*, giving all diligence." There are yet higher, brighter, better, positions which invite to diligence. It is a great mistake to suppose that it requires no exertion to be a christian. Many would gladly so believe, and would rejoice to go to heaven on flowery beds of ease. But there is no such way for either rich or poor, high or humble. There is one way, and but one, pointed out by Christ, and that is, "*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, will *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able." Laziness and self-indulgence are great foes to religion. There is nothing worthy of our attention, but requires exertion. Men do not become rich, or great, or learned, simply by idle wishes, or even by earnest desires. Eminence in any pursuit is only gained by persevering labor. It requires effort to achieve greatness. Were it other-

wise, we should fail to appreciate it. We do not value highly what costs us nothing, and if we made no exertions after religion, we should but lightly esteem it. The Apostle urges therefore to diligence, and not simply to diligence, but to "*all* diligence." Nothing is to be left undone; every effort is to be made. If men were only as diligent, and made the same amount of exertion in the cause of religion, as for riches and worldly honors, they would prosper greatly and rejoice in the Lord always.

The object of diligence is to "*add to.*" The christian should never be content to occupy the same position in religion for any length of time. The spirit of Christianity calls perpetually, saying "come up higher." "There is very much ground yet to be occupied:" and we must "go up at once and possess the land." Too many live in the past, and when they desire to excite pleasant religious feelings they go back to the day of their conversion, the time of first love, and live over again those days. It is all the joy they have; they remember how they once felt, and this gives them pleasure. Alas! for them. They have no present experience. Paul said, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus." It is thus a continual adding to. We add victory to victory, grace to grace, joy to joy, work to work, improvement to improvement; and so pass round after round up the ladder from earth to Heaven. The true christian ever prays, "Nearer, my God, to thee!" The starting point is faith—"add to faith." This is the ground work of the religious life, and he who has not faith builds upon sand, and while his hopes may stand in prosperity, when all goes well, in adversity, in death, in judgment, his foundation will be swept away, and he doomed to a miserable and eternal disappointment. He who starts for the Celestial City without faith in Christ, enters the wrong gate, and travels in the wrong direction. Poor man! he has lost his way and is in darkness, but he knows it not. First of all, we must come to Christ as poor, miserable, guilty sinners, utterly unable to save ourselves, and cast ourselves at his feet, crying "Save, Lord, or we perish." Faith looks back upon a life of sin and wickedness, within at a heart polluted and evil, above at an angry God, beneath at a flaming hell, before us to an eternity of woe, and then grasps the cross of Christ as the only hope, crying

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shall be."

The next step is virtue. Here is the progress of religious experience; first faith, then virtue. I dislike ever to find fault with our translation of the Scriptures. It stands deservedly high as a faithful and true rendering of the original into pure and unexceptionable English. It is certainly the best translation into English ever yet made, and perhaps the best that will be made for many generations to come. But while this may safely be said of it as a whole, truth requires that we say, that in a few instances—and they are very few indeed—the translation is at fault. These are not sufficient to mar the beauty, or change materially the sense, of the Scriptures. They do not affect a single doctrine; and the complaint can only be, that they fail to bring out the sense of the original fully. Now, in the case before us, we should hardly expect the apostle to say, "Add to faith virtue," which means religion or moral goodness; and then go on to require the addition to religion of the several virtues which make up religion. This is absurd. The original makes no such blunder, nor did the translators so intend; for when the translation was made, virtue was a term expressive of courage, fortitude, moral principle. Like many other words, it has changed its meaning in the course of years. The Greek word here translated *virtue*, means courage, fortitude, goodness, principle. The last is the best meaning for this place, because it embraces all the rest, and answers the design of the apostle. He is giving the progressive development of Christian character, and therefore intends to say, "Add to faith principle," which is a settled law or rule of action; an inward, fixed purpose of life; a permanent spring of conduct.

I wish to call your attention, therefore, to the subject of *Religious Principle.*

I. There is a great demand for the serious consideration, the calm investigation, of the true nature of Christianity in this regard. There are so many Reubens "unstable as water;" so many Ephraims whose "goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away;" so many, like Peter, who "deny their Master;" so many, like Hymeneus, who "make shipwreck of faith;" so many, like Demas, who "love this present world;" so many revival Christians,

who are zealous and active in times of religious excitement, but who are lukewarm and indifferent at other times; so many summer and fair-weather Christians, who are seen at the house of God when the weather is pleasant and warm, but when it requires self-denial to attend, we see no more of them; so many who are very regular and attentive when they have a popular pastor whose eloquence attracts and charms them, but at other times either go not at all or very seldom: so many who serve God when adversity drives them to the cross for consolation and hope, but when prosperity returns they forget God, and, like Jeshurun, "wax fat and kick."

The question arises, Does Christianity sanction this state of things? Does it spring legitimately from the nature of religion? Can it be chargeable to the influence of religion? If so, it ought to be known, for then these persons are not to be condemned; but if, on the other hand, Christianity provides for and contemplates a different development of character, these persons must be condemned, and their conduct denounced as utterly contrary to true religion.

We invite you, then, to enter upon the investigation; and we begin with a question, the answer to which setles the matter decisively and at once: Is religion merely an excitement of the emotional nature by the presentation of religious truth, or is it more? Mark you, the question is not whether religion excites emotional feeling. This we know to be true. God has not ignored the emotions in providing a religion for man. Religion is not simply for the intellect, nor for the will and conscience, to the exclusion of the sensibilities. It is for the whole man—intellect, emotions, will, conscience. A religion that does not affect the heart is worthless, and altogether unsuited to man's nature and condition. Nor am I to be understood as questioning the propriety of religious excitement. Doubtless David was excited when the ark of God was brought back; Solomon when the temple was dedicated: Moses when he saw the promised land from the top of Pisgah; Paul when he was caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words; and multitudes of the people of God, in ancient and modern times, have felt the most powerful excitement at times. There are times when not to experience an excitement of feeling would be unnatural, and almost impossible. The question is, whether religion consists in excitement of our emotions, or in something more. The essential element of religion cannot be emotional feeling, because that wants three of its most prominent characteris

tics. Emotional feeling wants the *uniformity* of true religion. It is variable and ever changing. Sometimes men feel deeply, and are powerfully excited, but at others they are calm, and apparently destitute of feeling. It is a source of frequent trouble to some persons that at times they feel, and at others they seem to have little feeling on the subject of religion. Again; true religion is by all conceded to be *adapted to all men;* but if emotional feeling is the essential element of religion, it sadly fails in adaptedness to all. Men are differently constituted with regard to the predominance of the mental faculties. There are those who have more feeling than others—of excitable temperament, and a greater prominence of the emotional nature. Others, from constitution and habits of life, are cold, intellectual men, never much excited, but always calm and reflective. Others again are men of great nerve and iron will, formed for action, neither excitable nor reflective, but cool and deliberate, and strong in purpose. If religion is a mere excitement of the emotions, it is clearly adapted to but one of these classes. It is totally unsuited to the man of intellect or the man of will, neither of whom can be excited to display much feeling upon any subject whatever. It is contrary to their constitution and habits of mind that they should do so. These need a different religion from that of mere excitement.

Once more: we know that the christian religion is a permanently abiding reality—something that is constant, always with us. But emotional excitement, in the nature of the case, is necessarily inconstant and variable. Excitement cannot possibly remain long; it soon wears itself out, and by the laws of the mind must produce a reaction, when there is a calm. Are we to believe that we have no religion, when we are no longer excited? This is inevitable if religion is no more than excitement of the emotions. We conclude, then, that religion is something more than feeling. It is a principle. Some think that the sentence "Religion is a principle" is a scriptural phrase, but in this they are mistaken. It does not occur in scripture; but is a christian axiom of universally admitted truth. I know of no christian divine who teaches otherwise. St. Paul frequently teaches this when he speaks of the Spirit as dwelling in us, leading and influencing us, and remaining always in our hearts as a controlling power. St. Peter teaches the same thing, where he says we are partakers of the divine nature. This divine nature becomes a living, active influence, a principle of life, a powerful inward motive. St. John says

that when a man is converted "he cannot sin, because *his seed* remaineth in him." A new principle of life is imparted to the convert, which changes his inclination and disposition, so that he no longer loves sin, no longer commits it willingly and deliberately. David spoke of himself as in a very unsatisfactory religious state, from which he sought relief. He says: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry; he brought me up, also, out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and *set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.*" Then he exclaims: "O God, my *heart is fixed*, my *heart is fixed.*" In this we recognise religious principle—something more than mere feeling. This is what Paul exhorted the Corinthians to secure, when he urged them to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." St. John speaks of this principle when he says: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." The word of God received into the heart and mind as an abiding principle becomes a source of spiritual strength. We see the presence and influence of religious principles in the case of Moses when he rejected the crown of Egypt. There was everything to excite his feelings, and lead him to a different course of conduct. Gratitude to the daughter of Pharaoh for his preservation, education, and her care and kindness, the desire of wealth aroused by the treasures of Egypt, the ambition for distinction and renown, the desire of ease and pleasure—all these were operating against his choice. Why then did "he choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" This was not a matter of feeling; there was more than feeling involved; it was because his religion was a principle of influence and power that he so acted. Abraham offers a striking illustration of religious principle. Isaac is his son, the son of promise, long expected and waited for, the son of his old age, the only son by his beloved wife Sarah, the son who is to be his heir, and in whom his seed is to be called—yet God commands to take him and offer him up a burnt offering. Can he do it? Are not all his feelings against it? Shall he commit murder? Murder his son so endeared to him? offer him up a *burnt offering*? How is it possible for him to do it? Here then is feeling against duty, against principle. If Abraham's religion had been one of mere feeling, it would have certainly failed here. Job was a man of great wealth, and surrounded by a large family of children, to whom he was most

devotedly attached. He has everything of an earthly character to make him happy—rich in possessions, rich in domestic affection, rich in his circle of friendship, rich in the esteem of all men, rich in religious hopes. But in one day all his property is swept away, all his children perish, and he is not permitted to see them die or be buried; his friends forsake him, his wife turns against him, and his body breaks out with loathsome and painful boils. If his religion is no more than feeling, it cannot possibly sustain him; it is more than nature that can bear all this. How is this? Hear him: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." This can be no less than religious principle in its most powerful and beautiful influence, for here it contends with feeling and overcomes nature. How glorious must such a religion be! how infinitely superior to a mere excitement of feeling! Daniel was severely tried, when the decree was issued that no petition should be presented to either God or man for thirty days, and thrusting into the lion's den made the penalty of violating it. If he complied with it he disobeyed God, but if he violated it he exposed himself to the charge of ingratitude to the king, who had greatly promoted him, disloyalty in transgressing the king's decree, and then to be devoured by lions, torn asunder piece by piece! But Daniel kneels down with his window open and prays as usual three times a day, calmly and firmly. Is this not from principle?

It was this religious principle that made such heroes of the prophets, martyrs, and confessors. Nothing less could have sustained them in the loss of property, friends, and everything dear to their hearts; nothing less could have supported them in imprisonment, exile, torture, and cruel death. How firm they were when other men were weak! how courageous they stood when others trembled! how calm and cheerful they became even at the stake and on the rack! Was it feeling that sustained Ignatius when torn by wild beasts? or Luther when going to Worms? or Jerome when singing in the flames? When John Ardly was before the cruel Bonner, he particularly described the pain of dying, and dwelt upon the sufferings he would soon be enduring unless he returned to the Roman Church. Ardly listened patiently, and then, as a hero, calmly replied, "Had I a hundred heads, they should every one be cut off before I would give up my faith!" Noble man! the world was not worthy of him.

Such, then, is the nature of Christianity. It is far more than ex-

citement of feeling. In its essential element it is a principle—a principle fixed in the soul of man by the Holy Spirit at conversion; a principle given in answer to the prayer of faith; a principle that succeeds faith in the development of christian character. But if we pause here, we leave this subject too indefinitely before your minds. We proceed therefore to investigate the properties of this principle. These we find to be two, life and power.

II. Religion is a *living principle*. Some persons content themselves by imagining that they have a sort of indefinite something which they call principle, but which has no life, and no power. Their religion is like a tree whose roots are rotten; it is dead, and ready to fall whenever the storm comes. It is like a watch with a worthless mainspring, that will not work, or only irregularly and without keeping time.

There are two great errors, which have each its advocates. There is a class who think too much of excitement of feeling; they suppose there is no religion where there is no excitement, and that the excitement will be in proportion to the degree of religion. There is another class who are ever prating about principle; but their boast of principle is the only evidence they give of religion. Theirs is a dead inactive principle. These are both in error. Religion is a living principle, and feeling is the result of life. Where there is life, there is conscious feeling. The religious principle fixed in the soul imparts life to the soul—a conscious religious life. Life in its proper conditions is always conscious, and attended by sensibility. So the religious principle, wherever found, gives a consciousness of its possession, and creates religious emotions. David so declared: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He took me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings; and *he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto God.*" Again he says: "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; *therefore will I sing and give praise even with my glory.*" The principle produces joy. He is happy when his feet are on the rock, and his heart is fixed. I will illustrate this point, for it is an important one. We will take three human bodies, two dead and one alive. We will not touch one of the dead bodies; but to the other we apply a galvanic battery. What is the result? As soon as the battery acts upon the body, it starts, moves convulsively, and perhaps staggers

about until the influence has passed off. But it is still a dead body, just as dead as the other; the only difference is, that under the influence of outward appliances it starts convulsively into a sort of irregular motion, while the untouched body is still and inactive. The living body is warm, moves regularly, and is active from an inward principle of life. Now, these bodies represent three classes of professing christians. The body acted on by the galvanic battery represents the noisy christian who, during times of great religious excitement, gives some seeming evidence of religious life, but as soon as the excitement passes away, he relapses into his former lifeless state of cold indifference. The other dead body is the professor, who prides himself on being a christian from principle; he cannot bear excitement, never goes into it—no, not he; he has no patience with shouting, or any manifestation of religious feeling; he believes it to be madness and wild enthusiasm. These bodies are both dead, and they are equally dead. But the living body represents the true christian, who is alive, has the principle of religion in his heart, and the feelings of a living christian—moves regularly, acts consistently, goes steadily on. How different he from the cold, feelingless body, or the body that starts and gives signs of life only when acted upon from without, having no life within! A christian who does not feel, is not conscious of religious feelings, is an anomaly in the moral world, a monstrous absurdity! Life is characterized by loves, hates, joys, sorrows, and struggles. So is the religious life. The true christian loves God with all his heart; his heart melts with tenderness at the name of Jesus, and he loves his brethren of the household of faith with a pure heart fervently. He hates sin and Satan with a perfect hatred. He rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. His are the joys of freedom, of adoption, of divine love, of spiritual delight, and of hope. Not unfrequently he mourns over his follies and failings, and sorrows over the ungodliness of men, and the desolation of Zion. He struggles against temptation, difficulties, and weakness.

Sometimes the principle of life becomes very weak, and is ready to die. In this condition men do many things they could not have done in any other days, many things which others condemn, but they say that their hearts do not condemn them, and they think themselves safe. Deluded people! The truth is, the religious principle is too weak to give them trouble—too weak to offer resistance. It is like a reed that leans any way that the wind blows. It is fast declining—

like a poor consumptive, it grows weaker and weaker every day. Soon the last live coal may be quenched, and spiritual coldness and death ensue. Is this the condition of any of my readers? Wake up, thou self-secure; examine thy lamp; see if there is yet oil in thy vessel; arouse, for the Bridegroom cometh!

III. I must pass on to notice the power of the religious principle. Religion is *an active principle.* Life is active, and the religious life is the highest form of living power. It has the energy of the divine nature. It comes from God, and is an emanation of his own glorious activity. What may we not expect of it? Activity is a great law of all principles. All have power and exert it. They move worlds, change seasons, cause day and and night, produce vegetation, paint the flowers, ripen fruits, and occasion all the phenomena of the natural world. If the principles of the natural are so active and efficient in working, may we not expect the principle of grace to be equally so? Nay, it is the most active of all principles, and if unrestrained it is the most powerful. Here is the origin of the doctrine of salvation by works. Men saw that wherever there was true religion, it produced the fruits of righteousness, and that the scriptures required holiness of life; therefore they concluded that salvation was by works. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, but that faith is followed by an indwelling and active principle which produces works of righteousness. They stand related as cause and effect, antecedent and consequent; one is the legitimate result of the other. The absence of obedience is good evidence of the want of religious principle. An obedient spirit is the characteristic of a true christian, and the religious principle must either be given up, or it will cause its possessor to seek after holiness. It acts upon the affections, purifying the heart; it acts upon the desires, producing a hungering and thirsting after righteousness; it acts upon the thoughts, directing them to Christ and his service; it acts upon the temper, causing meekness, gentleness and love; it acts upon the conversation, turning it upon heavenly things; it acts upon the conduct, producing conformity to the divine will, and an effort to promote the divine glory. If unrestrained, this principle would work wonders everywhere. Wherever it has been free, it has done great things. Behold the religious men of the past six thousand years! Even in days of darkness and general corruption, when there were few religious advantages, and no encouragements to piety, see the strength of this principle in the character of Enoch,

of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of Samuel, and a host of men of great renown in the Church of God.

We often hear men say, "I wish I was as holy as Moses, or Samuel, or John." They wish they could be great christians—eminent saints. And why are they not? Certainly they have more light, greater advantages, more assistance, stronger encouragements, and are altogether more favorably situated than were the ancients. They have the same religious principle. Why are they not eminent for piety, and distinguished for holiness? The difficulty is in themselves. They restrain and hold the religious principle in check. They grieve, resist, and quench the Spirit. It leads them, but they follow not; it moves them, but they go not; it draws them, but they yield not. Often has the religious principle pointed to some duty which they would not perform—urged to the house of God, to the prayer meeting, to attend class, to commence family prayer, to make restitution, to visit the sick, to pray with the dying, to attend Sabbath School, to speak to the unconverted. Some such duties have been pointed out, but they have been neglected.

I tell you plainly, if you resist and restrain this principle, you cannot become holy; but if you will only give it free course, and be led by its influence, it will lead to glorious heights of holiness. Now and then, we see here and there a christian who has allowed the religious principle its legitimate influence, and it has led him above the world, into the presence of God, surrounded him with a heavenly influence, and filled him with a sweet serenity and joy of soul. How pure his spirit, full of meekness and goodness, and ready to enter the heavenly world! I have seen such persons, in whose presence I have felt a sacred awe, and yet a holy delight; and the impression was made that they have been with Jesus, or on the mount with God.

Yes, my friends, if you have religion, you have in you a principle of great active power, which if you do not restrain, but only follow its leadings, will cause you to ride upon high places, to mount up on wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. A gentleman in Baltimore city many years ago bought a young eagle and kept him caged until he was fully grown, when he determined to give him liberty. He got together a number of friends as spectators on the public square, and there opened the door of the cage. The eagle walked out, and after going several times around the cage, stretched himself, arose, and flew slowly around a few times, looking

down upon the spectators, then darting upward he started towards the sun, and rose higher and higher and still higher, until he appeared but as a little speck before the sun. Just so with him who yields to the powerful influence of christian principle. He may look earthward awhile, and soar around near the ground, but if true to the grace of God, he will arise, and fixing his eye upon the glories of heaven, mount higher and higher, going on from grace to grace, and from glory to glory! True religion is like water. Water will, if not hindered, invariably find its level. If you place a vessel full of water by the side of one that is empty, and establish a communication between them so that the water can pass from one vessel into the other, the water will run into the empty vessel until it rises as high in it as it is in the other. Religion is the water that comes from God—it flows from the throne of God into our hearts, and if not hindered, it will raise us gradually but certainly to its level in heaven. Blessed truth! glorious power of divine grace! There is nothing too hard for it. There is no temper but can be subdued—no disposition but can be overcome—no habit but can be reformed—no vice but can be rooted out. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!

Reader, have you this divine principle, living and active? If you have, keep it and guard it as you would treasures of gold. It is of more value than gems and precious stones. It is the true riches of indescribable and ever increasing value. He who possesses it is rich indeed, and he who is without it is poor indeed No other wealth can compensate for the absence of this—no other supply its place. It is a fountain of heavenly peace, and an inexhaustible source of sacred joy. It is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is a light cheering the heart, irradiating the path of life, chasing away the gloom of death, and shining unto the perfect day.

But I must not leave the impression upon your minds that it is simply a subject relating only to individual experience. It is far more. It is a matter of vital interest to the Church at large. There is no greater want of the times, than a piety that is the result of a living, active principle—a consistent, laboring, firm, and uniform piety. The impression that religion is nothing more than blind enthusiasm, or the fitful excitement of the ignorant and weak-minded, must be destroyed, but it can only be done by showing the true nature of religion, and arousing the Church to the exhibition of a piety springing from prin-

ciple. Men must be taught by the Church, that grace is more than an exciting sound—that it has an existence in the heart as a directing and controlling power. I would rather have the distinction of calling attention to, and fixing this great idea in the minds of the people, than any honor in the gift of men. Let this be properly understood, and widely taught as the true theory of Christianity; let it be inculcated in the early lessons of family religion; let it find a place in the instructions of the Sabbath School; let it be published from the sacred desk; let it be firmly held as an undisputed truth by all christians; and the effect will be seen everywhere in the beautiful consistency and permanent uniformity of christian character, the greater respect it inspires among others, and the increased power of the Gospel. Now we look upon the vascillating piety, the instability and frequent backslidings of christians, and mourn the want of principle. When shall these mournings cease? When shall we take down our harps from the willows, and rejoice in the beauty of Zion and the salvation of the Lord? When shall Zion put on her strength, and come out of the wilderness, comely as Jerusalem, beautiful as Tirzah, and terrible as an army with banners? When shall the glorious battle-shout of victory ring from line to line of the militant host: "The best of all is God is with us?" When shall one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, and a nation be born to God in a day? That day of wonders and of glory will come, but not until we have a different religion from that of merely excited feeling. Guard well this point. If you have this principle, keep it; and you can only keep it by yielding to its influence. Wherever it urges, go; let it be unrestrained, and it will lead you to God's kingdom and glory. But what shall I say to you who are strangers to divine grace? What arguments can I use that have not been often urged upon your attention? What appeals can I make, that you have not often resisted? Will you still live without religion? Trust not in your morality, and expect not to be saved because of your honesty and benevolence. It is written, and will face you in the judgment, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Fearful truth! Morality may do for this world, because it regards your relations to men; but it will not do for eternity, because it does not regard your relations and duties to God. Hear me, then, "Prepare to meet thy God." Choose you this day "the better part that shall not be taken from you," and live for Heaven.

ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD.

BY REV. J. C. GRANBERY,

OF THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE.

"And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Rom. viii, 28.

What a rich promise! How full of comfort! Often has the troubled Christian thought that it was exactly suited to his need, and thanked God that it was ever written. Often has it seemed the only ray of light in thick darkness—the last fortress to which the soul could flee against the assaults of temptation. My brother, you would not have this one verse stricken out of the Bible for millions of gold. It is well to consider it. Sometimes men say that they wish they could understand it, but that it is a mystery to their minds. Let us have patience in examining it, and we may unfold the meaning of this mystery—if not to the satisfaction of a curiosity which would pry into the secret things of God, at least to the strengthening of faith and hope.

"To them who are the called according to his purpose." Here I might launch forth upon the stormy sea of controversy, which has agitated the Church during centuries, about foreknowledge, foreordination, election, reprobation, and kindred topics. But I am to-day for your comfort, afflicted Christian, and you have no heart now for such disputes. I prefer another course. I will attempt a simple explanation of the terms employed in the text, which, by avoiding rather than seeking to settle controverted points, may be acceptable to Christians of every creed. "To them who are the called according to his purpose." I understand by it the eternal decree, that through the mediation of the

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NOTE.—This is the only instance of a second sermon from one of the contributors; and it is proper to explain the reason. When all the rest of the work was printed, and the despatch of getting the printed sermons of several of the preachers who had engaged themselves in the plan of multiplying other engagements, was troubled because the volume would extend to an undue size, by various solicitations, begging for room for his last beloved, furnished this sermon.

W. P. STRICKLAND.

Son, salvation should be provided for the lost world, both Jews and Gentiles; that it should be offered as a free gift to all, upon the same condition of faith in Christ; and that, without distinction, believers of every nation should be gathered into the one family of God. This purpose, foreshadowed in prophecy, was first clearly and fully proclaimed after the ascension of the Son of God; and it began to be fulfilled in those Jews and Gentiles, who, in apostolic days, received the unsearchable riches of grace, and became members of the household of faith. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."* "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."†

Who are "*the called*" according to this purpose? All men to whom the gospel comes are invited to repent and believe, that they may enter upon the blessings of salvation; for God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In this sense many are called, but few chosen, because the majority disobey the call. But is not this equivalent to affirming that only those who comply with the required terms of repentance and faith are called to take their places among the children of God and heirs of faith? Of those who excuse themselves for declining, amid the press of other engagements, to gather to his feast, Christ says: "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." To him who appears among the guests without the proper robe, he saith: "Friend how camest thou in hither, not

* Eph. i, 9—12. † Eph. iii, 8—11.

having a wedding garment?" These are rejected—are bid to stand back—are thrust into outer darkness. But the humble, the contrite, the believing, are called to fellowship with God and Christ, and to the hope of eternal salvation.

God, therefore, of his rich mercy, had purposed that Jesus Christ should, in the fulness of time, be set forth as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and that, without any respect to persons, whoever received him by simple faith in his atonement, should be admitted to the high privileges and immortal hopes of his peculiar and elect people. Do you earnestly repent of all your sins? Do you, renouncing every other trust, cling to the cross of Christ for salvation? Then are you among *the called.*

"*To them that love God.*" Evidently this phrase describes the same class that the other does. Their great spiritual characteristic is the love they have for God. This is the first precept of the law and element of religion. Supreme love to God is the highest excellence in itself, and it comprises every other; it includes obedience. We must do his commandments because we love him. we desire to please him in all things, and we delight in his will, because it corresponds with, and is an exact expression of, his holy nature. Love cannot exist without constraining us to obedience; and obedience is merely apparent and wholly worthless, unless it is the development of love. Not those who say "Lord, Lord," but those who do his will, truly love him. You cannot love God and sin at the same time. love to one is hatred to the other. Love involves resignation: hearty approval of his will and acquiescence in it, as expressed in his acts as well as obedience: hearty approval and observance of the same will, as expressed in his commands. Supreme love to God cannot exist, apart from sympathy with those great ends which it is the pleasure of God to accomplish, or from confidence in his resources for securing his own purposes in the best manner. You see, therefore, how love to God will manifest itself, viz. in efforts to be like God in our nature, because we admire him above all others, and wish to please him, in carrying out his will by the employment of every energy, both to perfect our own holiness, and to promote the happiness of our fellows in a cheerful and patient acquiescence in whatever he does to us or to any of his creatures. Do you love God? If Christ should ask you, as he asked Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?" could you answer, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that

I love thee?" Then are you one of that number to whom applies the promise, "All things work together for good."

What is "*good?*" Not mere comfort. Some restrict it even to bodily or natural comfort, or to that which is adapted to promote such comfort. They understand by it only riches, health, honor, friendship, and like worldly blessings. If we take so narrow a view, we cannot admit the truth of the text, for it is contradicted by facts. Stephen was stoned. Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified. Many tortures have been employed to destroy those who loved God. And they have often had lots during life cruel as their deaths. Not honored, but disgraced. Not rich, but penniless and homeless. Not luxurious, but hungered, and thirsting, and thin-clad, and foot-sore with hard travel, and imprisoned, and scourged, and chained, and fastened in stocks. How is it in the most quiet times of the church? Look at the condition and experience of God's servants. You will find them in mean hovels and at heavy toil, scarce able, with all labor and pains, to get bread enough for themselves and their families. You will find them tossing upon beds of sickness through long days, and groaning through sleepless nights, writhing beneath acute paroxysms of pain, or lingering out lives of weariness and disease. You will find them watching with anxious faces by the couch of those dearest to them, who they fear will soon be torn from their embrace; or heartbroken at the graves into which they have just seen them lowered, and returning to their houses with slow steps and sobs of anguish, for the hearth seems desolate and the home cheerless now; or bowed beneath a more insupportable burden of grief, because madness or other calamity has darkened the mind of a child or other near friend. You will find them persecuted by the slander and abuse, the tricks and violence, of wicked men. There are good people to whom all things seem to work together for evil. Take a pious woman, (you have known many such cases as I will describe,) of gentle spirit, of much prayer, of faithfulness in every duty. Her husband's business does not prosper; he is thrown out of employment; he spends months upon his bed, earning nothing, but running up a large bill with the doctor, though — honor to the profession! — they are very kind to the poor; he loses debts, and has to pay security-money; their children are ofttimes sick; those who begin to be of age to help her, die; her own health is feeble. With a bare house, which she can scarcely keep decent; with a scanty fire, around which the large family shiver

in the piercing cold of winter; with meagre and wornout clothing, which affords little protection against the pitiless elements; with the coarsest fare, often refused by squeamish sickness, but oftener craved by keen hunger, when each one's pittance is too small to satisfy the demands of appetite and strength: not knowing how or when the exhausted stock will be supplied again; draining her own spirits and life by constant waiting on the sick by day and night; with aching head and feeble limbs, trying to do some little jobs which may bring temporary relief — do not all things seem to conspire against her? And you look away from her to some man in the community without any regard for God, who prospers every way. He has uninterrupted health: he looks fresh, strong, and buoyant; he is making money swiftly and surely: no scheme goes amiss: he has a happy family, in whose midst he can rejoice and refresh himself after the cares of the day: he has a large circle of friends and congenial company. It does look like all things are working together for good to the godless man. So it looks to the eye of sense, but far otherwise to the eye of faith. As God is true and faithful, all things work together for her good, for his harm. How is this?

The difficulty may be removed by to[illegible] over a few more years of the present life. [illegible] not wait for its complete unfolding. The [illegible] ere you pronounce your story [illegible] ent moment is not a fair [illegible] those persons before [illegible] against him, and [illegible] home he [illegible] see him [illegible] famished [illegible] aged [illegible] and [illegible] guilty [illegible] when he [illegible] tree [illegible] desert [illegible] though [illegible] by [illegible] is [illegible] wealth [illegible]

Mordecai, and procures a decree for the utter extermination of the Jews, men, women, and children, in one day. Haman is feasting: God's people are fasting, and weeping, and wailing. But see the result. The proud and cruel oppressor is hung on his own gallows, Mordecai succeeds to his dignities, and the delivered Jews have light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. It often happens, even here, that a season of trial to the good is followed by years of happiness, and that heavy reverses overtake the evil who for a while had prospered. They may continue rich, perhaps: but how easily may some rankling heart-wound, some domestic trouble, turn to wormwood every cup of pleasure.

This does not, however, remove the difficulty. It is useful in suggesting that even-handed justice does preside over human affairs, and that after years may furnish a satisfactory solution of what in Providence is now strange and dark to our short sight: but it is not a complete vindication of the ways of God. Sinners do sometimes flourish, and saints do sometimes suffer, to the very end of life. But why should we follow men only so far as the limits of the present life? Why should we not look beyond death and the grave? Does not the soul exist hereafter? Eternally? Is she not conscious, and has she not susceptibilities of pain or pleasure in the disembodied state? If we grant that God may show his goodness in working out years of comfort and honor for the righteous, after and by means of severe afflictions during the early part of life, and may show his severity by hurling the ungodly into disgrace from the height of honor he had reached, and stripping him of all his riches and all his glory, why may he not reserve his retributions until they are ushered at his summons into his immediate presence and into vast eternity? Why may not a lifetime be the day of trial to the good, and of seeming prosperity to the wicked? Is not eternity long enough to reward the one, and punish the other? God has an unpaid balance of good on his books to the credit of the christian, and a happy immortality shall be their recompense: he has an unsettled account against the sinner, and to the uttermost farthing shall he exact that debt in the prison of hell. He stands in slippery places; he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; he has his good things in this world; God's eye marks him; God's strong bow is drawn, and his sharp arrow made ready on the stretched string; in a moment his fortune shall consume into smoke; he shall suddenly stumble, and fall into

desolation, to rise no more; his comfort is a dream, and his glory a vision of the night, which shall cruelly pass away at the hour of waking; the Lord laughs at him, for he sees that his day is coming; haughty and voluptuous as he now is, there is a sentence written against his name, and an hour fixed in the great book of judgment, which would make his face pale, and his heart break with anguish, could he look into those pages; when that hour comes, not all the powers of earth can save him from his doom; his plans stop, his beauty withers, his head droops, his pride bows, his mirth is hushed then; in the grave he has no benefit of gold or honor, of sumptuous fare and costly raiment, of friends and family; in hell he is tormented with flames that never burn out, and parched with thirst that is never cooled, and cries aloud to a Heaven that is separated by an impassable gulf, and a God that is deaf to all his prayers. See the proud sinner in his luxury on earth; then see the poor wretch in his misery in hell. But how is it with the afflicted saint? He is taken up by angels from his hovel, or the rich man's gate, to a mansion in heaven; he leaves his bed of straw to rest in Abraham's bosom; he drops his rags, and is clad in spotless white; he wears upon his brow a diadem more majestic than Pharaoh's, sparkling with jewels that outshine the morning star; he sits down to a feast fit for angels, and Jesus serves him; his tearless eye is bright with gladness; upon his enraptured ear fall the melody of angel tongues and golden harps, and the sweeter music of the voice of Jesus; he has forgotten his moaning, and is ever breaking into songs of joy and shouts of glory; his face is radiant as a cloudless sun, and his mind is fresh as a dewy morn, and his voice is merry as the notes of any summer's bird; and his heart is so happy that tongue has no word, earth no symbol, imagination no conception, to express it. Will not such an immortality sufficiently reward us for our afflictions here? "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." *Light* affliction does he call it? Ah! it seems heavy enough to you, my brother; almost too heavy to be borne — a crushing, grinding burden. Poverty, care, sickness, bereavement, disgrace, temptation — are not these heavy? Yes; but Paul was thinking of the glory which should follow; that made them appear so light. Put into scales, the afflictions so flew up that they seemed light as a feather. "For I reckon," he says, "that the sufferings of this present time are not

worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Ah! these are the weights with which I would like to compare my future glory. When I am told that I shall be equal to the angels and bright as the sun, I cannot clearly understand the expressions. But I know what my troubles are; I can appreciate them; they are more and heavier than aught else, or so seem. And Paul says that they are not worthy of comparison with the glory which shall be mine — that they are light to this far more exceeding weight! He says, too, that they are but for *a moment*. That sounds strangely in your ear. The time wears away slowly when trouble presses you A night lengthens into an age. Perhaps day follows day — weeks, months, years pass away, without any relief. Hope is ready to die; you ask, How much longer must I suffer this? But Paul was thinking of the long hereafter. When he looked forth upon eternity, that boundless expanse, that endless line, years shrank into a moment. Did I describe the prosperity of the wicked man as a cheating vanity, conjured up by the fancy during sleep, vanishing as the senses open, perhaps through the very excess of joy, and leaving the deluded wretch to bitter disappointment? Yes: and what is the adversity of the righteous but the pain and the terror which oppress the slumberer in dreams, until he turns over in restlessness, and awakes to find all an illusion? So shadowy and fleeting are the joys and sorrows of this world: so substantial and lasting the things of eternity. Therefore "beloved," looking not merely to temporal good, but much more to eternal, "think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Do not think it *singular:* for tribulation is the old, the common, the one path to heaven; many have travelled it before you, and many are travelling it with you, and many shall travel it after you; every hour hundreds are stepping out of darkness and sorrow into fadeless light and ever-flowing joy. Think it not *mysterious*, as though God had forsaken you, or was angry with you; for he intends to give you an eternal compensation for every tear and sob. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Jesus lay in the manger, fasted in the wilderness, was tempted by the devil, had not where to lay his head, was reviled by sinners, was betrayed by a disciple, was deserted by his best friends, suffered intense mental anguish in Gethsemane, poured out strong

cries and tears, prayed thrice in vain that the cup might pass from him, was publicly mocked, scourged, sentenced as a criminal, was nailed to the cross, was in deep gloom at the hour of death, was laid in the tomb: thence he ascended to heaven, which opened wide its gates in welcome, and poured forth its myriad hosts to hail him with worship; the Father crowned him and seated him upon the throne, and bade heaven, earth, and hell bow in joy or else in terror before him. You see the way Jesus went, and whither it led him. You must go the same way; you must drink the same cup; you must be baptized with the same baptism; self-denial must be yours, the cross must be yours: or you will never go where Jesus is, and see his glory, and share his joy.

We are beginning to solve the mystery of the text, but we have not reached the exact idea yet. I do not feel satisfied with the explanation thus far given, viz: that all things work together for our eternal good, because against whatever is adverse in our lot now, shall be set an abundant compensation hereafter. I would like to know how and why our present afflictions produce such blessed results forever. I wish to see more clearly the connection between our diversified experience here and our eternal happiness. There seems to be too much abruptness in thus contrasting our condition here and that yonder, as though all were bitterness and blackness this side, and all sweetness and brightness the other; an unfilled and unbridged chasm intervening. I would be glad not to put off the results so far — to see that all things work for good even *now*. And this I believe to be the true doctrine. It will require eternity to develop all the good, and it will be more clear, more conspicuous in the future world; but it is being wrought, being realized already.

We will understand the text so soon as we rightly interpret *the good* which is intended to be wrought out by all agencies and events. Suppose we conceive good to be not mere *comfort*, whether temporal or eternal, but something nobler than this, viz: *the progressive development and perfection of our own natures after the image of God.* Let us agree that evil is more in ourselves, than without us; more in our hearts, than in our circumstances; that a remorseful conscience, and unruly lusts, and raging passions, are greater curses than poverty and bodily pain; that a degraded character is worse than the contempt of our fellows; that the consciousness of our own guilt and vileness is a heavier load than all the abuse and execration the world

can heap upon us. It is a bad thing to have a keen appetite and no food to appease it: but it may be worse amid the greatest profusion to become slaves to our appetites, and to pamper and stimulate them until they are morbid, insatiate cravings, which force us to indulge them, though the momentary gratification is working ruin to soul and body. Our lot may not be an easy one; but we often embitter the waters we drink by our own discontent, and spread for ourselves beds of thorns and thistles, by envy, and jealousy, and wrath, and suspicion. If the flesh has its wants which must be met, or pain will ensue, the soul has deeper and more lasting needs, to neglect which will cause us an ever-gnawing hunger and an ever-burning thirst. If the body has its diseases which produce weariness, and depression, and achings, there is a sickness, an unsoundness of the moral nature, which unfits for every proper employment, for all true happiness, which makes the heart sad and gloomy. This is evil. You may put a man with a stained conscience and a mean spirit, with a heart under the tyranny of licentious desires and malicious tempers, sullen and sour, amid the sweets of paradise or on the pinnacle of power, and he will be, he must be, a wretch. Purge away that guilt from the conscience; cure that inward disease, those festering sores of the heart; give the man a new heart and a right spirit; let him be born again, partake the divine nature, and begin a holy life: shed abroad in his soul love to God, love to his neighbor: fill him with thankfulness, resignation, and trust: let every appetite, propensity, passion, be moderated and controlled by reason and duty; let him enjoy the friendship of God and the approval of his own heart; give him a hope of living with God in spotless purity forever — and do you not confer on him the highest good of which he is capable? The true riches, the true beauty, the true glory, of a man consists in the virtues of his heart. These inhere in himself. These alone are his own. These depend not on shifting circumstances. These are a perennial fountain within — not a cistern which may be exhausted, or from which you may wander. External situation does have some effect. Things without us do affect our comfort. We have wants whose supply is outside of us. But let a man's own body be deeply diseased and violently tortured, in the lassitude, and melancholy, and pain thence resulting, is he not cut off from pleasure in the outward world? What to him are the sunlight on the varied landscape, the delicate viands which the epicure provides, polished mahogany, and

soft carpets, and rich curtains, and a magnificent couch, and sweet strains of music? And how mu h nearer to himself than the flesh, is his spirit. How much more sensitive. If the heart is sick, if the heart is wounded and bruised and bleeding, if there is derangement in all its parts and functions, how can there be happiness? It is the soul that constitutes himself and his worth, that raises him above the brute, that by its holiness can make him the equal of angels and the image of God. Our good must be found in moral excellence, in purity from all sin, in partaking the divine nature and reflecting the divine glory, in meekness, and gentleness, and temperance, and humility, and patience, and justice, and truth, and generosity, and love. This is the glory that is not artificial, not accidental, not changing: but genuine, essential, unfading. It sweetens the waters of Marah. The consciousness of innocence, the approval of our own hearts, unswerving integrity, superiority to all low and mean feelings, submission, confidence, and love, can triumph over all ills, can sing songs of gladness in the prison at midnight, can shout victory amid the agonies of death. Death itself cannot rob us of this good, though it takes all else. Gold may be stolen, honor may be wrested, friends may forsake, reputation may be aspersed, health may fail, kindred may be laid in the dust, the body itself may fall off and rot; but virtue, holiness, religion, survive every change of life, survive the last anguish of the flesh, bloom with unwithering beauty, shine with fadeless lustre. And thus it is that our good is eternal. Freed from all alloy, no longer liable to any tarnish, perfected, it is "*the glory that shall be revealed in us*"—a glory that cannot go out, cannot dim, but can and will widen and brighten evermore.

Now this is the good, begun here, perfected in heaven, continued forever, which all things tend and contribute to produce in us. It is the refining of the soul from all dross, its transformation into the divine likeness, the development and maturing of virtue, the glorification of the immortal spirit, its preparation here and now for the presence, sight, fellowship, fruition of God in heaven and forever. Our worldly, our bodily comfort is not a matter of indifference to God; but what chiefly concerns him is our holiness. Are not *all things* designed to promote in us this growth of virtue, and to result in immortal blessedness? Christ gave himself for us, that he might sanctify and cleanse us to be a glorious church, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. The Spirit is given to hallow and comfort us.

The Scriptures are given that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. All orders of the ministry are given for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, that we may grow up from feebleness to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The fellowship of the church is provided that we may consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works. God sends us rain, sunshine, food, friends, health, that his goodness may lead us to repentance, to thankfulness, to imitation of his own benevolence. He gives us talents, that, by employing them aright, we may not only be useful to others, but may exercise and strengthen our own graces. And *trials* subserve the same purpose. They teach us humility, self-distrust, the vanity of earth, the importance of living for heaven, the value of religion, faith in God, meekness, patience, love. They chasten the spirit. They subdue lust, tame passion, sober frivolity. They drive us to the Word of God, to pious meditation and prayer. They impose on us the necessity of watchfulness and self-control. Trouble is the time for reflection. Darkness is the season to try and to improve faith. When men slander and ill-treat us, we may learn to conquer pride and revenge, to put on long-suffering, gentleness, charity. Go to the sick room, and you will find the best examples of resignation, patience, trust, hope, love, deadness to the world, joy in Christ, heavenly-mindedness. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. We need to be made perfect through sufferings. Often we are straying, and can be brought back only by the rod. Often a toy is charming us to forgetfulness of God, and he breaks it. Often worldly, or sensual, or bitter feelings are waxing too strong, and they must be curbed and subjected by sorrow. If we do not need punishment, yet our virtues may ripen faster in adversity. Then we think much about God and heaven. Then we prize most highly the consolations of the Spirit. Is there any temptation against which we struggle manfully without profit? Is there any sorrow which we bear patiently, and are not improved? Thus does God choose to work in us substantial and abiding good. Thus does he draw us from the world to the enjoyment of himself, and invest our souls with the glory of holiness, which will outshine the sun in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, we glory in tribulations, also; they are agencies for our good; they work experience, patience, hope Therefore do we most gladly glory rather in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

Therefore it is needful that, for a season, we should be in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Thus do these light, momentary afflictions work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We now see why those things work good *only to them that love God.* We are moral beings, and must co-operate with every agency in order to be benefitted. Only to those properly exercised by them do chastenings yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It depends on the spirit with which we receive the gifts and dealings of God, how we shall be affected by them. If we view God in all things, in blessings and afflictions, in providence and grace, in our own business and plans, if we are patient, thankful, and resigned, then do all things contribute to our growth in piety.

We see also the connection of the promise with our *calling according to his purpose.* God made us to bear his image and show forth his glory. He has redeemed us by the blood of his Son to the same end. He manages his providential and spiritual kingdoms alike for the salvation of his people. We, bought from the power of sin by so dear a ransom, justified, taken into his friendship, taken into his family, and made his heirs — must not all things work the divine purpose towards us, the object near his heart — even our glorification? Yes, all things are ours to this end. Earth is ours. See the bounty of God in verdure, fruitage, harvest, flowers, in his care of the least blade of grass and the tiniest insect. Do you think that he will deny one of his own redeemed, beloved children, a share of his bounty? No: he withholds only as our good demands. Angels are ours, ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Life is ours, for the culture of piety. Trials are ours, to purge away sin, and invigorate religious principles. Death is ours, to bear away our souls to God. The grave is ours, that, sleeping in weakness like Christ, we may rise like him in power. Heaven is our home and inheritance. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

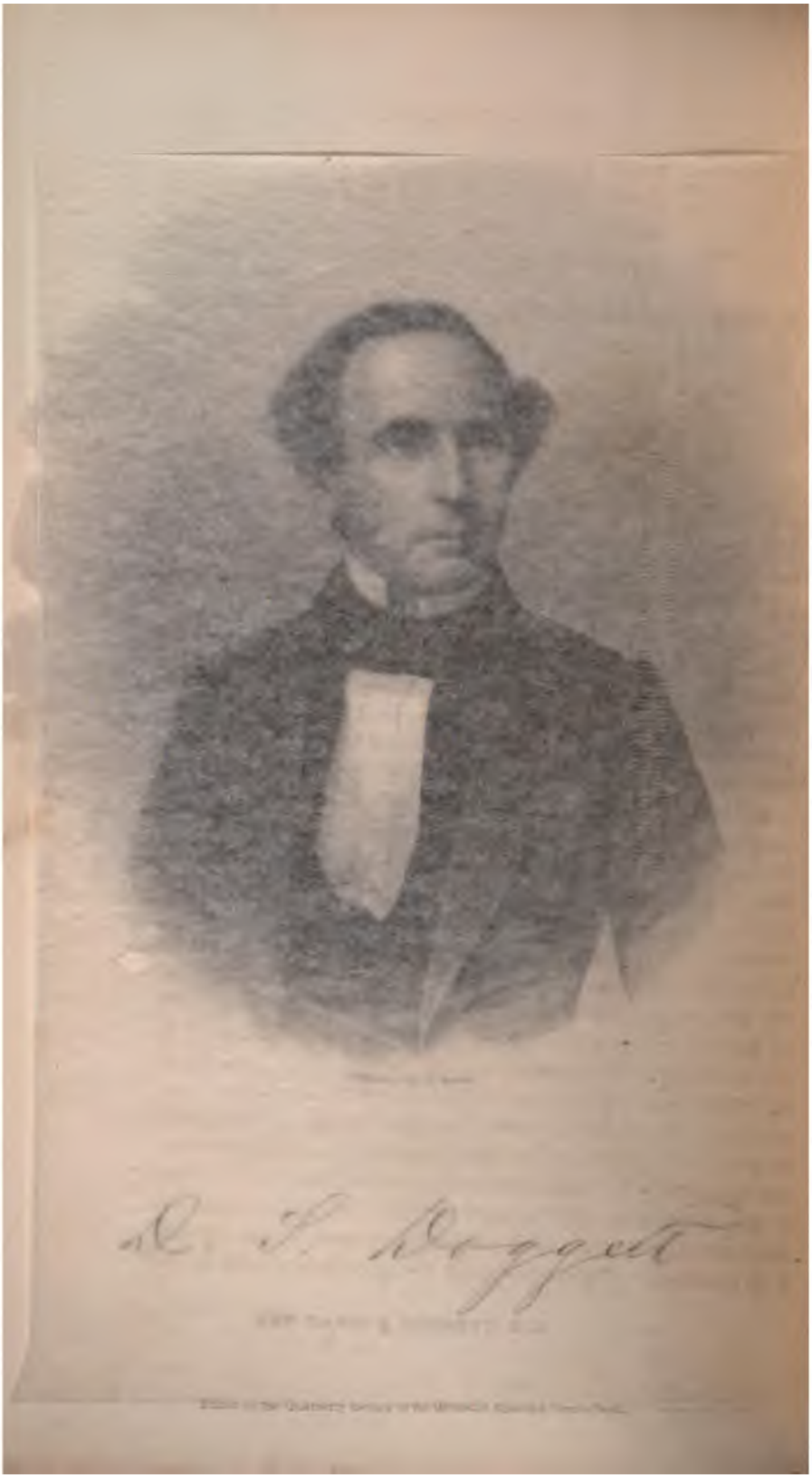
All things *work together* for good. We may not see their connection, their interplay, their bearing, on one result. We may not understand how the tangled threads of life are woven into a perfect web. The defect is in our vision; it is too dim and narrow. Had

we eyes, we might see all things, linked together and co-working, like cog-wheels and bands in some vast machinery. The private soldier may not understand the unity of plan in the mind of the general, by which the movements of different companies converge to a single end. The reader may not conjecture for a time how the ingenious author will manage the thickening plot. These are poor illustrations of the deep wisdom by which the complicated affairs of earth are directed to the accomplishment of one great purpose. Sometimes, as in the cases of Joseph and Haman, the design is sufficiently developed in this world to be appreciated by us. Hereafter, as the results shall be developed on the broad stage of eternity, we will understand more correctly and fully. Put us in possession of the law of gravitation, and what had been separate and disconnected phenomena are arranged in order and harmony as parts of one stupendous whole: the falling of a leaf and the regular motions of the heavenly bodies are seen to obey one common impulse. So a simple principle of God's moral government may explain to us the apparently confused and clashing operations progressing around us.

Can we avoid a glance at the general purpose which the events and agencies of all earth and all time are effecting—the eternal glorification of the entire Church? Look and listen to the wrecking storms witnessed in different ages! Do you tremble for the Church! Founded on a rock, she shall never fall. What chaos, what darkness, what tumult, abound among the nations! Over all preside eternal justice, eternal mercy. Wars and treaties, science and invention, commerce and conquest, the spread of civilization and Christianity over savage or unpeopled lands—all, all are working, under the watchful superintendence of God, for the preservation, the purification, the perfection, the triumph, of his saints. Above the din of business, above the up.oar and shocks of armies and revolutions, rises the shout of saints and angels—"Alleluia! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" It is the shout of *faith* and *hope*. As systems of error and sin, long-established and high-towering, fall with migh y crash to earth, loud rises the triumphant acclaim—"Alleluia! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" As Christianity is freed from some false doctrine, from some dark spot, from some heavy incubus; as she marches to new lands, and plants her standard on a strange soil, again the jubilant peal is heard—"Alleluia! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" When every idol shall have been broken, and the crescent shall have

yielded to the cross, and spiritual religion shall have everywhere prevailed; when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and the number of the saved shall be completed, and the Prince of Darkness shall be doomed to confinement and chains in his own hell, and the bodies of the dead in Jesus shall share the glory of his redemption; and the Church, as a bride arrayed in fine white linen, (the righteousness of the saints,) shall be presented to her Lord—then, as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, shall we hear the shout--O that we may join therein!—"Alleluia; the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is equally true, that all things work together for evil to the wicked. As a diseased stomach turns the best food into poison, so does a bad heart turn every blessing into a curse—every gift becomes a snare. The very gospel is a savor of death unto death. The atonement of Christ is the occasion of heavier condemnation, through unbelief. Their privileges (neglected) aggravate their guilt. Chastenings, instead of melting, harden their hearts. Prosperity blinds their eyes to their true interests. Fortune is as smooth, but slippery rocks. Honor is a height overhanging a deep abyss, and the head becomes dizzy. They sow to the flesh, and reap corruption. They are filling up their cup. They are fitting themselves unto destruction. They wax worse and worse--harder and blinder. Thus goes on the progress of virtue in Christians, of vice in sinners; until probation ends and retribution begins; until saints are ripe for heaven and sinners for hell; until justice, unrestrained by mercy, seizes the ungodly, and mercy, unrestrained by justice, blesses the righteous; until the one class enters upon the perfection and eternity of misery, and the other upon the perfection and eternity of bliss.



CHRIST AND PILATE:

Or, THE DIVINE AND HUMAN GOVERNMENTS IN CONTRAST.

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"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John xviii, 36, 37.

The Jews, in order to accomplish their murderous purpose upon Jesus Christ, availed themselves of the most successful of all human instruments: the jealousy of the Roman government. To obtain against him the sentence of capital punishment, which, as a tributary people they had no right to pass, they charged him before the legal tribunal with the crime of sedition. They pretended that he was an opponent, if not a rival, of Cæsar, and perhaps a dangerous competitor for the imperial crown. Under this accusation he was arraigned before Pontius Pilate, the provincial governor. Said they, "We have found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king." And to render Pilate's decision in their favor inevitable, they charged him with virtual conspiracy against his own sovereign. They declared, "if thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Thus were Christ and Pilate brought face to face. What a scene, my brethren! what a mystery! They confronted each other, not merely as individuals, not merely as a judge and a criminal, but as representative personages, brought by Heaven's unfathomable counsel, once in the lapse of ages, into contact and antagonism, that both might pronounce their verdict in the presence of a listening universe, on the greatest of all questions. Pilate represented the imperial authority of the

visible world, Christ that of the invisible world; Pilate the claims of human law, Christ those of the divine; Pilate the wisdom of man, Christ the wisdom of God; Pilate the court of Rome, Christ the court of Heaven. Pilate was a frail, sinful man, under sentence of eternal death; Christ, the eternal son of God, at Pilate's bar, about to receive the sentence of crucifixion, in behalf of Pilate and of that humanity which Pilate represented. Little did Pilate understand these contrasts. Christ understood them perfectly. Under these imposing circumstances, Pilate interrogated Christ as to the nature of his pretensions. The text is Christ's reply to Pilate. In this reply we recognise *his assertion of his royalty, and his description of his kingdom.* Let us examine—

I. His Assertion of His Royalty.—This was the very issue which the Jews had made before the governor. They affirmed that he had avowed himself to be a king; and for this accusation there was, to say the least, apparent ground. He had not, at any time, positively so announced himself. Others had done it for him. He had, however, indirectly assumed the prerogative in his conversations and in his parables. Several recorded proofs sustain the general allegation. The Magi, who had been guided from the East by the wonderful phenomenon of a new star, inquired, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Nathaniel had said, "Thou art the King of Israel." After the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, "Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force and make him a king." The mother of Zebedee's children had urged him: "Grant that these, my two sons, may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." When he made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, the multitude shouted, "Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord." He had said unto his disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." He had often, in his teachings, uttered the phrase, "kingdom of heaven." It was easy, out of such materials, to frame and to sustain the plausible charge with which Christ was indicted before the provincial court of Rome.

2. This was the only pretext on which Christ could have been made amenable to the imperial tribunal, and exposed to its penalty.

There had been no phase of his entire life which could have been construed into insubordination to the government except this; and this, only, by that malignant ingenuity which, to realize its nefarious objects, seeks, by a legal technicality, to consign its innocent victim to a death of torture. Of religious questions Pilate would take no cognizance. He would entertain only such as were civil and political, involving the welfare of society and the State. Hence, when Christ was arraigned before him as an impostor, Pilate declined official action against him, and earnestly endeavored to release him, without the firmness with which he should have assumed the responsibility; for he clearly perceived the real ground of the prosecution. It was only when his adversaries made and pressed their political plea that he allowed himself to yield to their wishes.

The chief priests had met in council, and determined upon his death. They had obtained the sanction of Annas and Caiphas, with which they conducted him to Pilate; who, to evade the painful emergency, sent him to Herod; who, again, remanded him to Pilate. Unfortunate man! He, against his own convictions and the solicitations of his wife, is obliged, at last, to meet that emergency, or suffer the impeachment of disloyalty to Cæsar.

3. The extreme perplexity of Pilate in this emergency, was painfully betrayed by the questions which he put to Christ in order to satisfy himself, and, perhaps, to vindicate his conduct. He propounded three, very distinct in their nature, and requiring different answers. The first was, "Art thou *the king of the Jews?*" The second was, "What hast thou *done?*" The third was, "Art thou *a king*, then?" The object of the first seems to have been to secure an explicit avowal as to the crime alleged; of the second, to ascertain whether his conduct had justified the allegation; of the third, whether he indulged any regal pretensions of any kind.

4. What, then, was the reply of Christ to these questions? A direct answer to the first, true as it would have been in one sense, might have been readily construed into a confession of guilt. It was, therefore, indirectly given, and was designed to make Pilate define his position; which he promptly did. Jesus answered him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me." A direct answer to the second, was rendered unnecessary by the notoriety of his acts; consequently

nothing more than a negative response was made. A direct answer to the third, was demanded by the posture of the case, and was accordingly rendered in unequivocal terms, in the three following specifications; *positive affirmation, the immediate object of his birth, and the grand design of his incarnation.* "Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." Thus, when the period arrived; when the pending crisis required it; when the great plan of God had reached its development, Christ, at the bar of Pilate, asserted his royalty, not only over the Jews, but over Pilate, over Cæsar himself, and over every man that is named, whether in heaven or earth! He then and there announced himself, "King of kings and Lord of lords." This, my brethren, is that "good confession," which Paul declares that Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate. Let us now contemplate,

II. His Description of his Kingdom. — On no subject connected with Christianity was it more imperative to impart definite ideas to the world. And no distinction have mankind been more prone to confound, notwithstanding the perspicuity with which Christ himself has drawn it. The purity and the majesty of our holy religion can be contemplated only in its own light. It must stand out in that clear and bold relief in which its author placed it in his testimony at the bar of Pilate, uncompromised by earthly affinities, in order to display its own grandeur, and to maintain its divine prerogative over the human mind. While, therefore, Christ asserted his sovereignty, he settled forever the character of his reign. This he did,

1. By a decisive disclaimer. Said he, in the audience of Pilate and for the instruction of all men, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." This negation is unspeakably important. It defines the boundaries between what would otherwise appear the conterminous and blending lines of two very different terrritories; those of the Divine and human governments: boundaries never to be obliterated from the map of human history. Let us endeavor to recognise them to day.

The kingdom of Christ did not *originate* in the world. All other forms of government have arisen from this source. They were

dictated by the exigencies or by the caprice of human societies. They claim no higher a paternity than human intelligence and human passion. That of Christ was planned in heaven, and descended with its founder to earth, and is the combined product of the wisdom and the love of God. Immeasurably distant are their respective fountains: the one, the bosom of Divinity; the other, the heart of humanity.

The kingdom of Christ is distinguished from those of the world, by its *objects*. Civil governments propose to secure and to promote the interests of men merely as citizens; as members of organized human societies; an object which the purest models accomplish imperfectly. Christ's government proposes to emancipate, purify, and exalt man's moral nature, with the design of transferring him to a loftier sphere, in which that nature shall be replenished with the boundless acquisitions of citizenship in heaven. This is its sublime object, in the accomplishment of which it incidentally, but infinitely enhances his civil and social felicity.

The kingdom of Christ does not resemble those of the world in the *modes* of their operation. They appeal exclusively to the motive of self-interest, by the presence and the force of visible agencies, and by the sanctions of human authority, in the guaranty of rights and the infliction of penalties, in accordance with their objects. Christ's government appeals to the conscience, by the rectitude and the weight of divine authority, and by the power of interminable results; utterly discarding civil disabilities as incompatible with its genius or its ends.

The divine and human governments differ in their *policy*, if so doubtful a term may be employed in the contrast. All human governments are actuated by a principle of self-aggrandizement; of their prosperity as governments; and adopt corresponding contrivances. The kingdom of Christ is administered on the principle of aggrandizing its subjects, and adjusts its measures to that principle.

Human governments are animated by the *spirit* of the world; by earthly and secular impulses. Their heart, their life, their sentiments, are identified with things temporal and visible. The spirit which penetrates and diffuses itself through that of Christ, is hallowed, heavenly, divine. The HOLY SPIRIT dwells in and works by means of that kingdom.

They differ in their *defences*. The last, and often the precipitate

resort of states, is the scourge of war. The outraged honor, rights, or territory of nations, are rebuked by its thunder and baptized with its blood. Jesus Christ disavowed, in his behalf, the intervention of arms. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Not forbidden to fight for their country, they are forbidden to fight for him. The interests of his cause are to be entrusted to his own hands. "Put up thy sword," said he to Peter, and to his church, "for they that use the sword shall fall by the sword." This is the maxim of Christianity. This is the command of its author. Happy would it have been for the world had it never been violated!

Human governments are *circumscribed* by territorial limits, and by a transitory duration. They may occupy a continent, and survive for ages. But conflicting claims and national disasters terminate their progress and annihilate their existence. The kingdom of Christ is universal in its domain, irresistible in its advancement, and imperishable in its structure. The dynasties of men, confined within their contracted limits, and held in check by contesting encroachments, shall decay and fall, and the coming wave of oblivion roll over all their pride and splendor. The kingdom of Christ will witness the catastrophe, and rear its grand and indestructible proportions over every foot of earth's conquered territory. Pope, in his Messiah, thus paraphrases the prophet:

> "The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
> Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
> But fix'd his word, his saving power remains,
> Thy realm forever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns."

Better still are the words of the christian poet:

> "Wide as the world is thy command,
> Vast as eternity thy love,
> Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
> When rolling years shall cease to move."

In these instances, at least, we realize the solemn disclaimer which Christ uttered in the ears of Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world; now is it not from hence."

He describes his kingdom,

2. By affirming its constitution, both as to its nature and its subjects.

It is a kingdom of "*truth*." It was to erect such an empire, that the Son of God was manifested. "To this end was I born, and for

this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;" should unfold, demonstrate, inaugurate, establish the truth. He thus exalts his government above all others. It is not only founded in truth, and supported by truth; it is truth itself; truth enthroned; truth triumphant. Let us ask, as Pilate did, at the time of Christ's declaration, "What is truth?" Unlike Pilate, let us wait for an answer. Pilate's question indicated his own skepticism; indicated the fruitless search of all philosophers and of all sages. The answer had never yet been given. It had never been found. He doubted, probably, whether it ever would or could be found. The laborious experiment of antiquity had been a terrible failure, and the human mind was reeling under its own recoil. Could truth ever be discovered? Pilate's question is the question of humanity; of all men, and of all ages. Little did he suspect that the prisoner at his bar was competent to impart to him and to the world the only satisfactory and complete answer; an answer which would leave nothing to be added, and allow nothing to be subtracted; that he was the infallible oracle, the eternal Word, whose utterances settled all questions. Little did he imagine that the Truth itself was before him in the person of his prisoner. If the unhappy judge did not perceive the fact, nor wait for a verbal reply, the one was visible, and the other has been given. Let us further remark upon both.

The truth which Christ came to inaugurate was not that which the world has vaunted and magnified as such: scientific truth; the discoveries and the deductions of philosophy. It was that absolute, essential truth to which every other truth tends, and into which it will converge with a focal blaze, when the period of its full development shall have arrived. This absolute, this essential truth, is presented to us in two forms, which are generically the same. Said Jesus, in his intercessory prayer to the father, "Thy word is truth." The revelation of God is the divine idea, the infinite reality expressed in words. It is the theory and the essence of the divine government, announced in human language. It is the solution of life's problem, the explanation of man's history, the guide of his destiny, and the aliment of his being. It is his true and only good. It is the whole truth, embracing and comprehending every other truth.

Again: Christ said to his disciples, "I am the truth." He is truth embodied, concentrated, perfected, impersonated. Divine Revelation is the emanation and manifestation of Christ by the Father

through the Eternal Spirit. He is the centre, the fountain, the subsistence of all truth, human and divine. He is the King, and his is the Kingdom of Truth.

Once more: The affirmation of Christ before Pilate defines the *subjects* of his kingdom. They are not philosophers, politicians, citizens, nor human beings, as such. They are those who are "of the truth;" who understand, appreciate, and receive the truth; who submit to its sway, surrender themselves to its power, and exemplify its influence. It is thus that "Wisdom is justified of her children," and Christianity achieves its conquests over the souls of men.

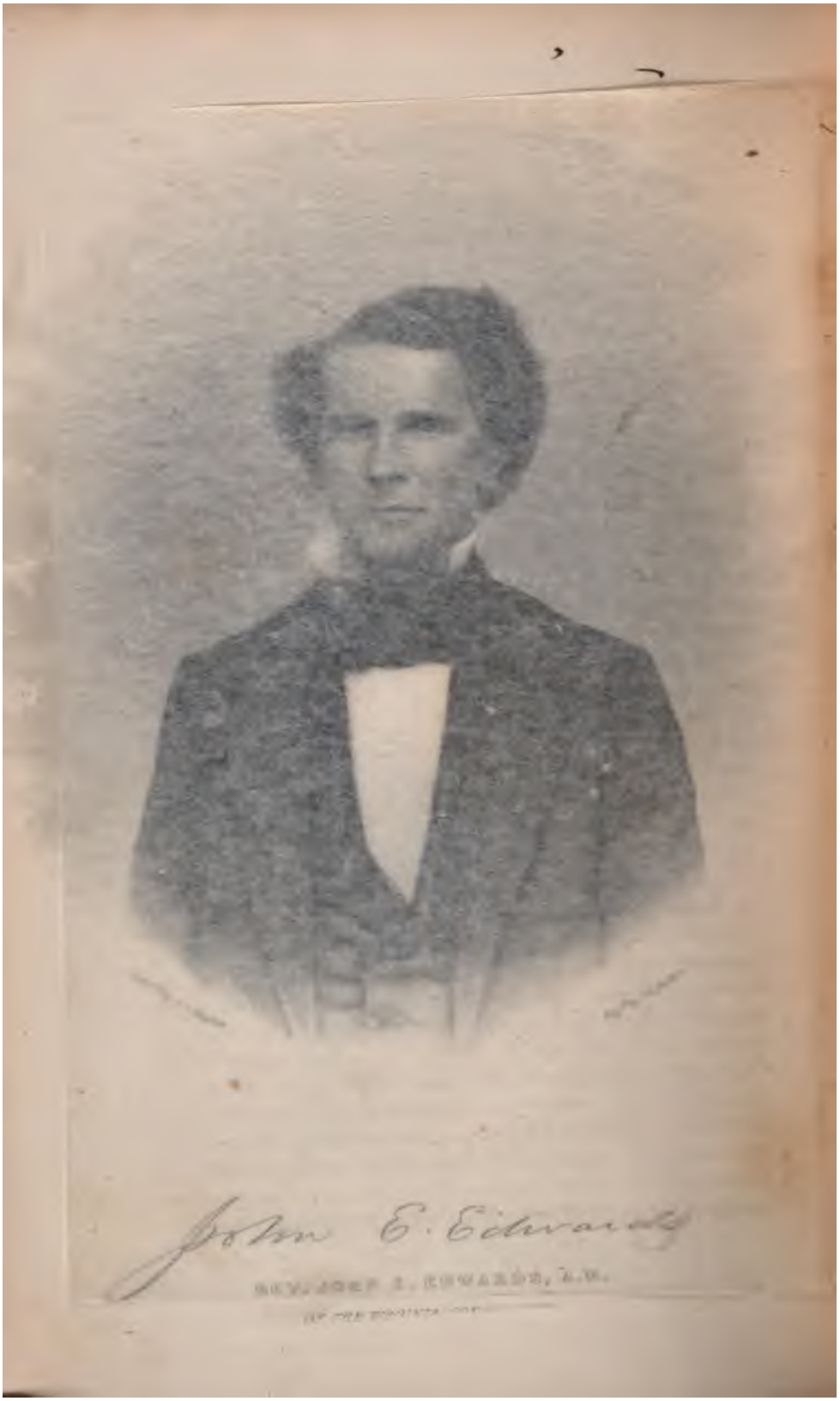
In conclusion:

Let us recall the strange and instructive scene, which our text so vividly portrays before us; one of "the princes of this world," and "the Prince of the kings of the earth," face to face; the one clothed with the visible insignia of human authority about to pass sentence of death upon the other, who, though his prisoner, is about to obtain the sentence of pardon for the world; the one, by his questions and perplexity, evincing the ignorance and unhappiness of mankind; the other, by his answers, bringing "life and immortality" to light; the one, personating the pomp and the secularity of the kingdoms of the earth; the other, the simplicity and the spirituality of "the kingdom of heaven;" the one, representing the dominion of human law; the other, the sublime dominion of the Truth; the one, ascending his throne to pronounce his official judgment upon the unrecognized sovereign of the universe; the other, descending from his throne "to subdue all things unto himself." What an interview! What an inversion of order! What a difference between parties. What pending results!

Again, let us recognise the cardinal distinction which our subject draws between the Christianity of the Bible and all forms of human organization. Civil governments, when discharging their legitimate functions, are perfectly compatible with Christianity. But their nature and spheres are totally dissimilar. The one cannot and ought not to merge into the other; nor ought they ever to conflict. In their true relations, they harmonize without combining, and reciprocate without interference. All that Christianity invokes of civil government, is its protection. All that civil government needs of Christianity, is its blessing. The integrity of civil government is preserved by adhering to its legitimate purposes; the purity of Christianity

maintained by discarding all alliance with the State. It is thus that a civil government becomes the patron of Christianity; Christianity the support of civil government; and it is thus that each untrammeled and uncorrupted, accomplishes its highest possible good for the human race; the one for its temporal, the other both for its temporal and eternal welfare.

Finally, whatever may be our individual, social, or political predilections, it behooves us to submit to the King of Truth, and to hear his voice. To be citizens of his kingdom, is to ally our destiny with its own duration, and to enrich ourselves with its eternal wealth. To enjoy this boon, we must be "of the truth." We must be subdued by it, identified with it, and sanctified through it. We shall then "know the truth, and the truth shall make us free." Enfranchised by its authority, invested with its prerogative, and imbued with its spirit, our exalted condition, our ennobling hopes, and our perennial pleasures, will demonstrate to ourselves, and illustrate to others, its grandeur and its grace; will justify the universal prayer, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" and extort the rapturous doxology, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever: AMEN.



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"For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."—Matthew xxv, 29.

The parables of the Great Teacher are, for the most part, founded upon some well-known custom among the people of his day, or upon some established law of nature, or upon some recognised principle of action in the business affairs of life. The parable of the virgins is based upon a prevalent oriental custom; the parable of the mustard seed, of the leaven, and of the corn from the early blade to the mature ear, each has for its foundation an established law; the parable of the treasure hid in a field, and that, also, of the creditor and debtor, furnish us examples of that class of parables founded on business transactions. Some of the parables combine more than one of these elements as a basis; and I may mention, as a striking example of this class, the parable of the talents, with which the text stands intimately connected.

Having thus briefly introduced the text, I shall go on, as preliminary to the main object of this discourse,

I. To lay before you an explication of the parable of which the text contains the pith or moral.

A chronological arrangement of Christ's parables, I doubt not, would exhibit a gradual progress and development in his sublime instructions, rising, by almost insensible gradations, from the simple and elementary to the more abstruse and profound; from the germinant seed to the mature grain. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, with which this chapter opens, represents the church in a state of *repose* and expectancy, looking ahead for something in the future; the parable of the talents, which follows it, represents the church in a state of *activity* and responsibility. As has been happily said by some one, we are presented in the one case with persons presuming on the mercy of God; in the other, with persons deterred by

fear. In both parables we have examples of persons *saved* and of persons *lost*. The parables stand closely connected, and are instructive.

The parable of the talents is based on a custom known in the East in the days of Christ. The familiarity of his hearers with the custom in question, excited a deeper interest in their minds as he proceeded with his discourse. The moral lessons inculcated peered through the almost tangible imagery which he employed; at first, phantom-like—mere skeletons stalking in the twilight—but presently, as the attention became more fixed, and the interest grew more intense, the truth flashed full on the mind. The phantom became a reality; the skeleton a thing instinct with life and energy.

A man of fortune, owning slaves in the Orient, when he travelled *out* of the province in which he resided, could not carry them with him, and as he wished to derive the greatest possible profit from their labors, on his leaving he committed certain trusts to them on certain conditions. He made each servant an interested party, and promised a suitable reward to a proper use and improvement of the goods with which he severally intrusted them. He knew, from intimate personal acquaintance, the different capacities of his servants, and he therefore gave to them according to their *several ability*, in the proportion of one, two, and five. Having made a judicious distribution of his moneys among his servants for improvement, he took his departure, and spent his time in foreign travel and diversion in other lands. On his return, after a long absence, he called his servants together for settlement. Each one was required to render a just account of the moneys committed to his hands, and receive the promised reward for improvement. In every case where there had been activity and increase in the use of the talents intrusted to the servant's management and care, he bestows a compliment and the merited reward; in each case of failure to improve, he refutes the false reasoning urged in justification or extenuation of the neglect, and inflicts condign punishment for the delinquency.

It will be observed that no servant is rewarded simply because he had *five* or *two* talents, and that no one is punished simply because he had *but one* talent. The reward is bestowed for improvement; the punishment is inflicted, not for waste or prodigality, but for simple neglect.

On this custom of the East, Christ founds the parable of the

talents. Christ himself is the master of the household; we are all his servants, the goods committed to us severally are our natural endowments and our temporal possessions, but mainly our spiritual blessings, the measure of grace imparted to us, and our capabilities for usefulness in the church, in promoting the happiness and welfare of those around us, and of advancing Christ's kingdom in the world. The travelling "into a far country" is evidently intended to represent Christ's departure from earth, and his ascension to the right hand of the Father. The "long time" is the interval between his ascension from Mount Olivet and his second advent, when he shall come "without sin unto salvation." The "reckoning" unquestionably has reference to the final judgment, when every man shall be rewarded according to his works: a day of reckoning—a day of settlement—a final settlement between God and man. By the "good" servants, we are to understand those Christians who have been active and diligent in the improvement of all their means and capabilities of usefulness: those who have industriously employed whatever of ability God has given them for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. By the "wicked and slothful servant," we are to understand the man who refuses to employ his limited means of usefulness, simply because they are limited; who pretends to justify his indolence and neglect, either on the ground that he could do but little for God's cause any way, or on the ground that he could not hope to meet God's exactions by the most vigorous improvement of the little talent which he possesses. The whole practical bearing and application of this parable is summed up in the text: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath;" and it contains the following proposition, namely: *That an active improvement of the gifts of God for our personal salvation, or for usefulness in the church, will be followed by a proportionate increase, whereas the neglect to improve what God has given, will be followed by decrease, and, ultimately, by an utter deprivation of all that was originally bestowed.*

II. It is my purpose to illustrate and establish the doctrine of this proposition. The illustrations of this doctrine are abundant.

1. We briefly advert to some natural and obvious facts that strike the mind on every hand as illustrative of this subject. God has

endowed us with wonderfully contrived bodies. His wisdom and goodness are singularly displayed in the mechanism of our physical organization. There is an admirable adaptation of the various parts of this mysterious piece of machinery to the diversified ends and purposes for which it was constructed. And yet, we have but to neglect the proper improvement of the different parts of this physical apparatus to render it extremely inefficient in the accomplishment of the objects for which it was designed by our Maker. The neglect of bodily exercise, and the use of appropriate means to develop and invigorate the system, is followed by pliancy of bone and muscle, by feebleness and debility, by a sickly constitution, and a miserable existence; whereas the well-directed use and employment of one's physical faculties tend to strengthen and brace the body: the arm becomes brawny and strong, the chest expands, the step grows firm, and the muscles elastic, until the ruddy glow of health tinges the cheek, and an undimned fire burns in the eye. To him that hath—that *improves* what he has—shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not—that *does not improve* what he has—shall be taken away, even that which he hath. But this doctrine is also true in relation to the active use and improvement of our temporal possessions. The man who employs his capital in a prudent and properly conducted business, or who invests it in safe and well-secured stocks, or even employs it in private hands at simple interest, realizes a steady increase of his means; whereas the thriftless drone who lives on his capital stock, without making his principal productive, constantly exhausts his resources, and verifies the truth of the somewhat paradoxical clause in the text, "from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

The doctrine of our proposition also finds striking illustration in the general law by which our intellectual and moral faculties are governed.

A man of ordinary mental endowments, by application and unwearied diligence in the pursuit of knowledge, may become a scholar of extensive learning and varied information. Mental culture increases mental power, and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge. The more a man knows, the more he may acquire, and the acquisition is rendered easier by the increase of knowledge. On the other hand, the sluggard will grow weaker in mental power by the mere neglect to develop his mind. His intellect will actually dwarf, and

he who might, by patient study, have acquired a name as a scholar may, by simple neglect, verge on imbecility in intellect.

Sometimes we are astonished to find men whom we once knew as rising stars of no ordinary magnitude, sinking back into obscurity, and losing their position in the galaxy of bright names in which they promised to shine. Their history furnishes a forcible comment on the doctrines of our text. The God-like faculty which we denominate conscience, or the moral sense, is subject to this same law. By cultivation and exercise it becomes strong, powerful and authoritative in its monitions and impulses. By neglect it loses its keenness of moral discrimination, becomes weak and feeble in its impulses; right and wrong are robbed of their independent and distinctive character; and the wretch who has thus neglected to improve a talent of incalculable value, finds himself bankrupt in moral virtues, unable to resist temptation, the victim of passion and appetite, and more nearly allied, in disposition and character, to the foul fiends of hell, than to the good and holy angels. Instead of rising higher and still higher in moral excellence, with a conscience as responsive to the calls of duty as the æolian harp-string to the zephyr's kiss, he sinks deeper and still deeper in crime, becomes hardened and vile, and finally reaches a point of degradation in which he is given over to reprobacy of mind, to believe a lie that he may be damned. "Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

The *will*—that high executive faculty with which God, in the proportion of one, two, and five, has invested every man—is subject to this law under consideration. Its proper use, in obedience to the dictates of an enlightened and cultivated conscience, clothes man with dignity and power. By neglect and abuse of this endowment, he becomes the sport of every wind of doctrine, unstable as water, a cloud that floats on the atmospheric current, double-minded, and utterly fails in the accomplishment of any noble purpose or plan in life.

In all the above enumerated regards, we find striking and interesting illustrations of the doctrine deduced from the text, any one of which might furnish a theme for a profitable discourse. But I propose to furnish still more important illustrations of this doctrine.

2. From a consideration of the operations of this law in relation to *spiritual gifts*. And

First. The gift of *divine enlightenment*, which produces conviction for sin and leads to repentance, is a talent subject to this law.

The pearl of salvation is embedded in the gift of divine enlightenment. This is a priceless jewel. Who, indeed, dare attempt to estimate its value? And yet, how little prized by vast multitudes around us! It is trifled with, and tossed aside as though it were valueless.

A single ray of light from the Holy Spirit—the great sun of this fallen world—penetrating the darkness of the sinner's mind, and shedding its genial influence upon his cold, dead heart, and struggling amid the gloom that reigns in the chambers of his guilty soul, is worth more than than ten thousand worlds to the sinner, "were each world a crysolite."

This talent is bestowed in different degrees on different individuals. God gives it to men according to their "several ability." To one five talents, to another two, to another one. And if any man is damned at the last, it will not be because he did not have five, or two talents, but because he did not improve what his God gave him. He gives to every one a talent that may be improved to eternal life. Sometimes the light is strong, the conviction for sin powerful, and the consequent feeling or emotion intense. Tears may fall, and earnest prayers may be extorted from the agonized heart. This large measure of divine enlightenment devolves fearful responsibilities upon the sinner: where much is given much will be required. But God, for wise reasons, unknown to us, gives this talent of divine enlightenment in smaller measure to others. He, however, only requires us to improve what is given, be it much or little. And the sinner who is the recipient of a *single talent*, may so improve it as to be able to make quite as satisfactory a return to the Master at the last, as he who received the five, and meet with just the same compliment of approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Everything depends on improvement. "For unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance"

But very many fail to improve the light given, simply because the measure of conviction and feeling upon the subject of religion does

not come up to their preconceived expectations. They compare their exercises with the exercises of St. Paul, under divine awakenings, or with the experience of some remarkable person of whom they have read in religious biography, and because it does not exactly correspond with these standards, they either reject it altogether, or wait for some more powerful divine manifestation; meanwhile complaining and repining because God does not come down suddenly upon them, smiting them to the ground and crushing the reluctant and irrepressible cry from the heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Their language is, "If God would convict me powerfully; if he would so melt and move my hard and stubborn heart as to make me weep and mourn; if he would only give me such a view of my sins, and the hell to which they expose me, as to excite my fears, and stir me up to pray, then I would go to work and seek pardon and reconciliation to God."

Sinner, hear me: if you continue to wait until you realize your own views and expectations on this subject, you will wait until the day of grace is past with you; until your present light expires, and your convictions for sin entirely vanish; and until you realize what that meaneth, "from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

The sinner's duty under divine enlightenment is, however feeble and faint the illumination, to place his foot at the farthest verge of the light that plays around him, and make an advance, and he will discover that, like a man in the dark with a lantern in his hand, the light will advance with him; more than that, the circumference of vision will enlarge, and if he continue to advance, his path will shine yet "more and more unto the perfect day."

It is dark; I tell you to go to a certain point which I designate. You strain your eyes, peering through the gloom, and tell me you cannot see the distant point. I know it. But I place a lighted taper in your hand, put you in the path, and tell you to advance. That light will answer all the purposes to guide and conduct your steps over all the intervening space till you reach that point of destination. The Holy Spirit finds the sinner in the darkness of nature's night, and urges him to fly to the cross. But he cannot see the cross; he cannot fix his eye on the suffering Son of God. He stumbles and knows not what to do. The Spirit sheds its light around him, and tells him to go forward. Improve the grace given. Begin to pray,

and feel after the Saviour, and the light will increase; "for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abundance."

I remember once to have visited the Washington Monument, in the city of Baltimore. I stood at its base and looked up to its lofty summit that towered high above me. I wished to ascend to its topmost pinnacle, and gaze upon the magnificent prospect that I knew must greet the eye of the beholder from that elevated point. My eye rested for a moment upon the lowermost step, and as I looked up the spiral stairway in that rock-built shaft, I discovered that but three or four steps were visible; the rest were shrouded in darkness. Just then the keeper, who saw how I was puzzled, placed a little lantern in my hand, which glimmered faintly around me. "Take that," said he, "and mount the steps. It will conduct you safely to the top." I took the flickering lamp and began to ascend, holding it in such a position as to shed its light on the steps ahead of me; and upward and onward I urged my way, panting and almost breathless. Wherever I paused, there the light, which only revealed a few steps, lingered around me, until I advanced again. But, faint and feeble as it was, I found it sufficient for all my purposes, until at last I emerged from the gloom; the sunlight began to meet my upward gaze, and in a moment I stood on the summit, with a clear blue sky above me, the city lying at my feet, the canvas-whitened bay stretching away till "the steel-blue rim" of waters bounded the vision, while all around lay one of the finest panoramic views that ever greeted my eyes. The application is plain. Take the lamp of the gospel in your hand, and hie away to the cross. Don't stand still; if you do the light will tarry. Go forward. Improve grace, and grace will increase; you shall even have abundance. Press onward, discouraged though you may be, and it will not be long till you have reached the point "where ether pure surrounds, and Elysian prospects rise."

Divine enlightenment is a talent. It is the germ of eternal life. But patient persevering labor is necessary to its development. Neglect nips it in the germinant state. "Learn to labor and to wait."

Second. The *lowest evidence of pardon* is a talent, subject to this law.

The man who truly repents—that is, becomes so sorry for sin, under the divine enlightenment, as to give it up and turn away from it, needs nothing but simple faith in Jesus Christ, as his Saviour, to

bring him into a state of forgiveness and acceptance with God. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith is counted to him for righteousness.*" "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that *believeth.*" "Abraham *believed* God, and it—his *faith*—was counted to him for righteousness." It is not a sinner's tears, or prayers, or promises, or sufferings, that saves him; it is his faith. He gives up his sins; confesses them to God; asks God for Jesus Christ's sake to forgive him; and firmly believes in his heart that what God has promised for his Son's sake he most surely will perform. And standing at that point, he lays the hand of faith on the atoning victim, and he finds God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. God's anger is turned away. He can be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Now, if that penitent sinner firmly believes that God for Christ's sake does accept and forgive him, his faith is "counted," "imputed," "reckoned" unto him for righteousness or justification. And when this act of pardon passes in the mind of God, if the believer instantly receives a full and overpowering sense of forgiveness, attended by a large measure of joy, and a spirit of rejoicing, then the gift of pardon is accepted; it is appreciated; and there arises with it a sense of indebtedness to God for his abundant mercy and goodness, and a purpose of heart to love and serve him. But, if the sense of pardon is not very decided; if it barely amounts to a faint persuasion in the mind that God for Christ's sake has pardoned the sinner; if it is unattended with joy and rapturous delight; if there is no outward manifestation in the way of rejoicing, then it is often treated as the wicked and slothful servant treated his *one* talent: it is buried, and the work of grace ceases, or goes backward in that heart.

Now I hold, and I am very certain the view is scriptural, that the removal of condemnation, or the conscious sense of guilt, from the heart of the penitent who confesses and forsakes his sins, and who stands by the cross of Christ, *trusting* in God's promise of forgiveness to him that *works not but believes*, is to be received as a low evidence of justification; and that the new creature—the new creation—begins from the mysterious change which is then and there wrought in the soul by the divine energy of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. This state is always attended with a degree of *peace*, and the subject of this inexplicable moral transformation realizes that "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and that

"being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, the position which I have assumed as scriptural is, that in the absence of joy, or the spirit of rejoicing—in the absence of any *outward* demonstration whatsoever—the simple calm, the peace, however small, received as indicated above, should be taken as a precious and invaluable talent; and that the recipient of this high trust should address himself to the work of improvement, with the assurance that "unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." The fact that the measure of grace is small—is *one* talent instead of five—does not relieve the servant from the duty of using and improving that talent. He is under the same obligation precisely to improve the one talent, as the more highly favored servant is to improve the two or five with which he may be invested. With the larger number of talents there is greater responsibility; and the servant who has but one talent will find it quite as easy to improve that one as for the servant who has two or five to improve the greater number intrusted to him. God knows our "several ability," and he does not lavish his grace improvidently upon us. He knows what we are capable of using successfully. He does not impose responsibilities upon us that we are not able to meet. We should therefore accept thankfully what he designs to give, and go to work to make the best of it. God knows far better than we how much he can trust to our improvement; and there is a species of arrogance and presumption on our part in presuming to dictate to him what measure of grace shall be meted out to us in our conversion. It is wicked and offensive in any one to murmur and complain against the master because he does not give two or five talents instead of one. The lowest evidence of pardon may be improved and cultivated until it shall ripen into the most abundant and satisfactory assurance. The mists of doubt will vanish before the rising sun; the clouds that skirt the horizon will dissolve into thin air, and the great spiritual luminary will ascend higher and still higher, until in unclouded splendor he culminates in meridian glory, and pours a flood-tide of light and blessing upon the enraptured heart "filled with all the fulness of God." "To him that hath shall be given"—given in abundance; given in exceeding abundance; above all we can ask or think.

But if we cast away our confidence; if we doubt our acceptance because it is not attended by the degree and kind of evidence we an-

improved. If we reject and despise the little because we expected much; if we bury the one talent because it was not five, we shall lose all even that which we have shall be taken away from us. How many who have been pardoned and regenerated, have failed of the grace of God and gone back to the world, to realize at the last the fearful loss of the spirit, simply because God did not give them a full measure of evidence of forgiveness, in that measure of evidence which the humble penitent needs. One enjoys peace, and even a small degree of joy because a ray of light breaks upon his dark and benighted soul like a flash of lightning upon the gloom of midnight. Another is overwhelmed with the removal of all guilt and condemnation, because he was not filled with the love of God at the moment as to shout forth unbounded praise to God in the congregation. This is the part of the slothful and wicked servant.

Take what is given with a grateful heart. Bless God that he has given you anything. Accept a dime, a penny, and go to work. Trade it over to the best advantage. It will multiply. Labor and industry is the law of spiritual progress. Your capital stock will increase, and increase too with astonishing rapidity. You may become rich in grace and good works. There can be no failure here. Hundreds and thousands have commenced the religious life with a single talent of grace in conversion, and have become eminent Christians, deeply experienced in the divine life, and have attained a power of faith, and an acquisition of the Christian virtues—patience, meekness, love, longsuffering, and charity—that has entitled them to the highest rank among the saints of God on earth, "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Then trifle not with even the lowest evidence of justification. Prize it highly. It is all that God can safely commit to you for improvement. But remember, it is susceptible of endless development. And as the broad and majestic river may be traced to its source in some quiet dell, where the noiseless fountain oozes from the bosom of the earth beneath the shade of some moss-covered rock, and creeps silently away half concealed by the velvet turf, sparkling for a moment in a stray sunbeam that here and there steals through the overhanging foliage: so the glorified saint may survey his spiritual career from the mount of holy vision, tracing it back to its commencement in a quiet serenity that stole over his anxious soul while engaged in prayer; or to a transient emotion of joy that thrilled

for a single moment the tense chords of his heart, touched by the ethereal fingers of the Holy Spirit; or to a momentary emotion of love to God and his people that lifted his affections from earth to heaven, lasting, it may be, only long enough to be fully conscious of the existence of the *peace*, the *joy*, the *love*, and then was succeeded by tedious intervals of doubt, depression, and gloom; to a beginning so small he may trace the unspeakable blessing of eternal life which crowns his immortality in glory.

However desirable it may be to enjoy an overwhelming sense of pardon and regeneration at the moment the great work takes place—an evidence that banishes all doubt, and leaves the mind in a state of full assurance—it nevertheless often happens that early Christian experience is mingled with much fear, perplexity, and doubt; and too many are discouraged and cast away their confidence simply because it is weak; because it is *one* instead of *five* talents; because it does not compare favorably with some familiar instance of Christian experience recorded in religious biography, or with that of a pious friend narrated in private conversation.

And yet, a careful scriptural examination of the subject, would reveal the interesting fact, that the change effected, and the evidence furnished, differ only in *degree*, not in *nature* or substance; in quantity, not in quality. The responsibilities imposed, in each case, are proportioned to the measure of grace imparted; and "he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

Let the timid doubting Christian take encouragement. He does not serve a hard master. God requires no impossibilities. Diligence will certainly be crowned with reward; while simple neglect will ultimately be followed by an utter deprivation of all that was originally given: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

III.—The *capacity for usefulness* in the church is governed by this law.

This department of the subject furnishes abundant illustration of our proposition. The humblest and the highest ability are alike subject to this law.

In the distribution of gifts for improvement in the church, the

Great Master has given for *the work of the ministry*, "apostles," "prophets," "evangelists," "pastors," and "teachers;" the object of which is, "the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ."

Among those whom God designates for the work of the ministry, he distributes a diversity of gifts. All are not equally endowed. One is a Paul; another an Apollos; another a Cephas. But all are Christ's ministers. Each one has his appropriate work, and each his appropriate endowment for that work. The ability for the performance of the work assigned to each, is given by the Great Head of the church in the proportion of one, two, and five. No one is accountable for the improvement of that which he has not. Where much is given much will be required, and when but little is given but little will be required. In the final settlement, he that knew his Master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; while he that knew not his Master's will, though he did things worthy of punishment, shall be beaten with few stripes!

It will not prove the slightest extenuation of a man's guilt, in the day of judgment, to say that he was not eloquent like Apollos; that he could not command the logic of a Paul; that he could not move and persuade like a Summerfield, or pour forth the oratory of a Bascom. This will not excuse the neglect of whatever grade of ability God may have given him. For the use and improvement of *that*, the man is responsible. And we have hundreds of illustrious examples to show what a man may accomplish by the active employment and improvement of limited ability. The man of plain mind, who is incapable of commanding the figures and flowers of rhetoric; who can never delight his audience with bold and lofty descriptions, or the gorgeous creations of the imagination; whose elocution is even repulsive, and who can scarcely rise above a simple didactic or narrative style, may, by a vigorous and untiring use of his talent, accomplish an immense amount of good. Activity and industry in the use of his limited ability will be followed by increase. Each successive step prepares him for a farther advance; and with a growing influence, and the gradual accumulation of the results of his labors around him, he may reach a point of usefulness in the church that will embalm his name in the memory of thousands, and enable him to leave a legacy of incalculable value behind him when he is called to enter "the joy of his Lord."

But, unfortunately, this ability, simply because it is small, is buried by thousands who are entrusted with it for improvement. The man who might have improved his one talent so as to have had abundance, by his neglect and affected humility, becomes worse than bankrupt. He is deprived of all, and cursed as a wicked, slothful, and unprofitable servant. Not for having squandered and wasted his lord's money, but for a failure to improve it according to the intention of the master.

But this subject is not restricted in its application to the ministry, The *laity* of the Church "are called in their measure to edify one another," as says Mr. Trench, in his comment on the parable of the talents. They all have "a spiritual vocation, and are entrusted with gifts, more or fewer, for which they will have to render an account." One has a talent, it may be, for leading a class; another, for public exhortation; another for Sabbath school instruction; another for visiting the sick; another for public prayer; another for instructing inquirers after salvation; another for distributing the alms of the church among the poor; and still another for soliciting funds for benevolent objects. Now, each one is called on—male and female—to use that ability, be it much or little, for the advancement of God's cause in the world. And a gift for usefulness in any department of service in the church, is subject to the law under notice. Improvement and active use will be followed by increase; neglect will result in an entire deprivation of all that was originally bestowed.

From small beginnings how many have risen, as class leaders, as exhorters, as Sabbath school teachers, and as visitors of the sick and imprisoned, to positions of extensive usefulness and influence in the Church of God! Up, thou indolent and slothful servant, and to thy work! God is not a hard master. He does not reap where he has not sowed. He does not expect something from nothing, nor does he expect a great deal from a little; but he *does* expect a proportionate improvement and increase of what is actually given away. Away with your idle excuse that you can do nothing; or, what you could do would be so small and inconsequent that you are excusable in doing nothing. Unfaithfulness in that which is least will subject you to a fearful doom; and when at last, like a guilty culprit, you are dragged into court, and begin to say, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where

thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth;" what must be the shame and confusion of the miserable delinquent when his Master responds: "Thou wicked and slothful servant; out of thine own mouth I will condemn thee. What thou hast said is false; but admitting its truth, what should have been thy conduct? If thou wast afraid to use thy talent; afraid to enter the marts of trade; afraid to risk it in any independent enterprise of thine own, thou shouldst have attached thyself to others, stronger and more skilful than thyself in the management of my funds, under whose direction I might at least have obtained 'some small, but certain return for my moneys.' Take the talent from him, and cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is the terrible doom of the idler, the drone, the man that wastes not, but fails to improve his talent for usefulness in the church, however small it may be. Be alarmed and tremble, ye sluggards! You will be damned for doing nothing.

There are several instructive lessons suggested by this subject. And—

First. We learn *why* it is that so many who, at one time of life, are convinced of sin, and make partial efforts to obtain salvation, fall short of pardon and regeneration.

They fail to improve the talent of divine enlightenment. They do not follow out their convictions of duty. They halt and complain because their feelings are not so much excited and aroused as they think necessary. They wait for more light, without improving what they have, and the result is that these convictions abate, and are transferred to others; and I doubt not that many sinners will look back from the pit of hell, and fix their eyes upon the very point in their experience when, because of their neglect, the scales, for awhile at equipoise, balanced for damnation. Beware, my unconverted friends—you who attend church, and wait all the time for more light, conviction, and feeling, and do not improve what God has already given. Some of you will never have a particle more, till you improve what you have already. Go to work. Begin to pray and repent. "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath." Millions are now in hell, and millions more are

on their way, who have had a sufficiency of light to conduct them to the cross. Their damnation is attributable—not to profanity; not to outbreaking crime; not to wicked rebellion and obstinacy; but to *neglect.*

Second. We hereby account for the *spiritual poverty and inefficiency of many members of the church.*

They have been genuinely converted—born of the Spirit—passed from death unto life; but they have declined from their first love. They have hid their Lord's money for safe keeping, too honest to risk anything. The gift for prayer and active Christian duty has been permitted to lie idle; and the consequence is, the soul has lost its relish for divine things; the hands hang down; the knees become feeble; and he who once had a capital stock which was susceptible of indefinite expansion and improvement, is now a worthless and bankrupt idler in the Church of God. Backsliding begins in idleness and neglect. How many become spiritually poor and inefficient—doing nothing for themselves or others—for no other reason than a failure to improve the talents committed to their trust!

Third. We are struck with the amount of good the *whole church* might accomplish if *all* the talent of the church were put into active use.

We have a state of things verging on bankruptcy, where we might have an amount of wealth that would satisfy the heart of Jesus Christ. Our Sabbath schools languish; our class meetings grow cold and decline in interest; the poor are neglected; the sick die without spiritual comfort; penitents grope in the dark for the want of instruction; the pulpit is less efficient than it should be; wickedness multiplies on every hand; the church, instead of pushing its victories to the speedy conquest of the world, barely holds its position at home. And why? Is it because God has not furnished the grace and the ability to sustain all these interests of the church? Nay, verily. It is because the talent of the church is not employed. It is buried; and oh! my God, what a fearful reckoning awaits the crowds of wicked and slothful servants that throng our altars! Suppose all the talent of the church were put into requisition; every member, male and female, from the least gifted to the most highly endowed, was at work, doing something, employing his talent—

what would be the result? Very soon the church would become as terrible as an army with banners. The wilderness and the solitary places would blossom and bloom like the garden of God. The strongholds of heathenism would give way, and the long, loud shout of ultimate triumph would soon ring out from multiplied myriads of happy souls, and the whole world should see the salvation of our God! What a melancholy spectacle is presented in the swarms of idlers standing upon the graves of buried talent—talent enough to save a world, if rightly employed—while that world, from inexcusable laziness and neglect, sinks with a heartbreaking wail to hell! O, for a trumpet-voice to arouse the sluggards in the church; to awake and excite the idlers to activity. Time is flying. The period for labor is short. With every vibration of the pendulum, souls are sinking to hell; and yet the church slumbers; and thousands excuse themselves from the work, which they could so easily perform, of plucking sinners from the fires of perdition. Thou wicked servant, stretch out thy hand, and save a soul from death!

Fourth. We learn from this subject, that while *one particle of grace remains it may be improved.* The work becomes harder and still harder with the delay; but, thank God, while a single spark remains, it may be kindled into a flame. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die." Ready to die! What a blessing they are not quite dead! There is a little love, a little faith, a little hope, that yet lingers in the heart. Improve it right speedily.

Sinner, if there is one good desire; if there is the slightest inclination of the soul to God, fall upon thy knees and begin to pray; there is yet mercy and salvation for you. But the light wanes; hasten to, the cross ere the night cometh, when no man can work. Cold-hearted formal professor, is there any faith, any love, any zeal, in the thy soul? If the Holy Spirit still tarries with you; if there is any longing after God, your case is not hopeless. But everything depends upon an active improvement of what remains. Dig up the buried talent; and by your future diligence, make up and atone for past neglect. God waits to multiply his blessings upon you. "Unto him that hath shall be given."

Finally. The day of final settlement draws on apace—"silent

as the breeze, but dreadful as the storm." After a long time the Master will come. A scoffing world may mock, and ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" "After a long time." The church may grow weary in waiting. The world may grow old and gray with time. Successive generations of men may pass in silence to the tomb. The sun may grow dim with age, and the star-fires may expire on heaven's high arch; but after a long time the Master will come and call up his servants, to whom he committed his goods for use and improvement, for a final reckoning. With what joy the faithful will meet him; and with what ecstacy will they hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." For that compliment, who would not cheerfully toil and bear reproach? Who would not suffer and die for his Divine Master, to hear him say, in the great day of judgment, when the world is on fire, when the faithless and unbelieving, the sluggard, the hypocrite, and the backsliders are crying for rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb—who, I repeat, would not be willing to toil, to suffer, to bear reproach, and even to die, to hear the blessed Jesus pronounce the words upon him: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"?

E. E. Curley

REV. EPHRAIM E. CURLEY, D.D.

THE WORD OF GOD: THE ONLY SAFEGUARD AMID THE PERILS OF YOUTH.

BY REV. E. E. WILEY, D. D.
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"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way By taking heed thereto, according to thy word."—Psalm cxix, 9.

Encouragements to the young to forsake the paths of sin, and to tread the ways of virtue, abound in the Scriptures. So many and special are the promises made to this class of persons, that the minister of Christ may be well assured that his labors with them will not be in vain. A rich moral harvest awaits him who tills, in faith and hope, this virgin soil. The seeds of sin, the noxious weeds of corruption, the briars and thorns of depravity, may find here, it is true, a ready and a rapid germination and increase; but these, under the tiller's hopeful toil, with the help of God, may be eradicated, and the plants of virtue reared in their stead to a comely growth, and an abundant yield of precious fruit. Left to itself, the ground will soon become a wilderness, where monsters lurk and vipers hiss; but under the hand of patient cultivation, it may be made as the garden of God. It is not so, however, with the old, whose hearts are dry as summer clods, whose sensibilities are blunted, whose habits are fixed. There is hope of the wayward youth, that he may yet turn to the paths of life. The tender twig, though it shoot aslant from the ground, may with kindly guidance yet grow heavenward, and send out from a stately trunk its hundred arms and luxuriant foliage—the glory of the forest. But what can bend the old gnarled oak, whose shapeless stock and crooked limbs have defied a thousand wintry storms, and thrown off, unsplintered, the fiercest bolts of heaven? The young may cleanse his way—may change from a vicious course—by taking heed thereto, according to God's word; the old, however, seldom do—nay, hardly can. When the Ethiopian shall change his skin or the leopard his spots, then may they also do good that are accustomed to do evil.

The text contains a question of much interest and importance—How shall a young man make his way pure? The term *way* here signifies a little path, and indicates a distinction between this and the broad, frequented way, in which the ungodly millions walk. The language implies that the goings of the young are not yet so well established that their steps may not be retraced. They have begun to go astray—their feet have already entered the ways of vice—yet these ways, little though they be, lead with certainty to destruction. Their number is many, their names different, yet all tend to the same end. They may be fitly represented as lanes leading off to the left, out of the broad road, into which they come again, bringing their travelers to swell the vast multitude rolling on to the chambers of death. But the text also assures us that the young who have been allured into any of these forbidden ways may come back to the path of life. There are ways of escape on the other side of the broad road, directly opposite each lane to ruin. Let the young man, then, pause and ascertain his true moral position; let him ponder the path of his feet, and take heed thereto, according to God's word. Into which of these lanes has the tempter beguiled you? For there are but few young men in this age, who have not either made some progress in a course of vice, or at least looked with desire upon the gorgeous scenes which fancy paints along this tempting path, and which the flatterer falsely declares to be realities.

That you may better know them, let us point out some of the more dangerous roads into which you are liable to turn, in which you may perchance now be traveling, or around which you may be lingering, and listening to the voice of the charmer. You will not have traveled far in the broad way until you reach a path upon the left, leading off to apparently Elysian bowers. This is—

The way of the indolent. Thousands of happy loungers are gathered about its entrance. Splendid palaces attract the eye, whose walls are festooned with rich drapery, whose floors shine with Persian dye, whose walls echo with music's voluptuous swell, and glitter with the sheen of golden light. Couches of down invite the weary to repose. The air is redolent with the perfume of flowers, and vocal with songs of nature's choristers. Gardens, rich in the beauty of colors and of fruits, gladden the eye and delight the taste. As on the traveler slowly moves, bowers of ease, cooling water brooks, and voluptuous inns, retard his steps. At length, full to satiety of fancied joy,

diseased in body and imbecile in mind, lost to every noble impulse, and reft of hope, he would lay him down to die; but the on-coming crowd presses him toward the end of his path, and soon he disappears in the countless throng which fills the broad way leading to destruction. How many thousands of the young find a shameful end through this path! Thinking that they may turn back at any moment, they consent to indulge in indolence, and to regale the senses for a time. But they wake, alas! too late, from their dream of delight; they wake only to the consciousness that their energies are paralyzed—that their hopes are dead! I ask you, young man, at this point, to pause, to consider the end of this way. Listen not to the voice of the charmer, nor to the lying speech of the deceiver. God has made you for labor, and not for indolence. The powers of your body as well as of your soul are strengthened by toil. Great achievements are attained only by great labor—a labor too that is incessant, not fitful. The yielding stream, by its constant flow, will wear its channel in the solid rock; the ever-ringing clink of the chisel will tunnel the stupendous mountain; the ceaseless toil of the coral insect will pile his rocky reef from the depths below to the ocean's surface, and stretch it from shore to shore. Work on, then, work ever, at something noble and good. Enough of rest will be found in the slumber of the grave. Such, too, is the teaching of God's word. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Say not, there is a lion in the way—a lion is in the streets. And remember, too, that the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. But let us look at—

The way of the profane. No sin is more common among us than that of profane swearing, and there are but few of greater magnitude. It is an offence not so much against the peace of society and the rights of our fellows as against our Creator. For this reason public opinion has not set the seal of its condemnation upon it, nor the civil law enacted and executed against it severe penalties. Hence it is too often regarded as a venial transgression, to be winked at rather than to be scorned. The man who steals (no matter how trifling the sum) is branded as a thief, scouted from even the common walks of life, and doomed to carry the stain to his grave; nor would we mitigate the punishment which is inflicted upon him; while he who utters profanely his Maker's name, in all his waking hours, and pours forth

blasphemous oaths, until by habit he is unconscious of his crime, is neither discarded by the polite, nor utterly rejected by the good. But which is the greater sinner? Society will tell you, the thief. But we ask not for the answer in the light of human law, but in the light of the Divine Word—in the blaze of God's searching eye. In heaven's chancery what decision may we suppose, from the revelations given, would be made? In the Divine Law-book it is said, Thou shalt not steal. In the same decalogue God has written with his own finger, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; and has added to this prohibition, (and to none other, as if to magnify his abhorrence of this sin,) For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. There is not, perhaps, another crime which men commit, for which they might not find some apology, flimsy though it be. The liar may plead in extenuation of his sin the dread of punishment; the thief, poverty and hunger; the drunkard, his quenchless thirst; the libertine, his lust; the murderer, his passions; the midnight assassin, his drunkenness;—but what excuse has he to offer who takes his Maker's name in vain—who pollutes his soul and sears his conscience with blasphemous oaths? Is it that his Creator has not dealt in kindness with him? Let him tell, if he can, the sum of God's mercies towards him; let him fathom the depth of the love wherewith Heaven has loved him; let him estimate the value of the cost of his redemption—and then answer, if the name of his Father in Heaven is not worthy at least of his reverence. Surely he who thus insults Infinite Goodness must be approaching rapidly the gulf of perdition, and requires but few more days, and but little practice more, to make him a finished fiend. Does he swear that more credit may be given to his assertions? His declarations were believed, perhaps, before the profane oath passed his lips; but now, doubt has taken the place of confidence. The vilest of the vile must surely hold the words of him in less esteem who would attempt by profanity to strengthen them. Shame on the man whose mouth is full of cursing, and whose tongue has never yet pronounced with reverence the name of the blessed God. Turn thou, my son, from the way of the profane. Go not with the countless host that throng this lane of death. Take heed to thy steps, according to God's Word. Forget not the holy law uttered amidst the flaming thunders of the mount, nor the milder injunction of an apostle: But above all things, my brethren, swear not—neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither

by any other oath—but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation. But consider also—

The way of the "man of honor." This way is marked with the tears and groans of stricken ones—the wail of widowed hearts—the blood of murdered men. The "code of honor," in its teachings, in its spirit, in its practical results, is so abhhorent to humanity, so bold a contradiction of Christianity, and so surely a remnant of a barbarous age, that we could hardly suppose that it would not flee before the march of Civilization, and wither in the light of the Gospel. It cannot be countenanced by the good, nor practiced, except by men of distorted conceptions of right, and of corrupt hearts. It is a golden image, which public opinion—a tyrant more cruel than Nebuchadnezzar of old—has set up, and to which all who bow not are doomed to the fiery furnace. It is a Moloch monster that fattens on human gore, and sates his cannibal maw on nought but human flesh. It has its origin in a false view of honor, tramples upon God's law, and sets at defiance the plainest teachings of reason and of conscience. In the "man of honor" passion reigns supreme, subjugating the better principles of the heart, and scoffing at Divine authority. Resentment and Revenge—two fiends that would extirpate the entire race, if left to themselves—are the presiding judges in the court where this code is admitted. But society will brand him a coward who acts not in accordance with its requisitions. What society? That of the just, the pure, the holy on earth; that of the blessed, of angels, of God, in heaven? Nay, verily; but of fiends incarnate upon earth, and of lost spirits and of devils in hell! Better that the world call you coward, than that God stamp upon you the mark of Cain, and call you a murderer. Every duelist is a murderer in the eye of God's law; and whether he shed the blood of his fellow or not, the purpose of his heart is manifest, from his relation to his antagonist. If for keeping the Divine commandments you are to be loaded with opprobrious epithets, you may have grace to endure it. But he has a stouter heart than mine, who can bow in cringing attitude before a wicked public sentiment, and in the same act hurl defiance at God's law, and run madly upon the thick bosses of his bucklers. Company not with the men who call this the way of honor. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Solomon, in his Proverbs, has well said, He

that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. And a greater than Solomon hath said, Thou shalt do no murder. But mark well—

The way of the licentious. As you approach this path, the scenes before you will seem strangely at variance with the conceptions you had heretofere formed of its travelers and of its horrors. Over the entrance is written, in gilded letters, "The way of many delights." The young, the gay, the beautiful, alone are there. Glittering in costly array and jewelled light, the joyous throng dance on, swift as the flying hours to the sound of their revelry. That health reigns here, the blooming cheek, the sparkling eye, the elastic step, proclaim; that this is pleasure's path is known by the rapture playing upon every face. While the beholder is surveying the bewitching prospect before him, drawn towards it by the power of an enchanting spell, his trembling feet a moment pause, lest pitfalls and snares may be there. For he has heard that there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death; that the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. Turning his face towards the way of escape, and just ready to seek the path of life, he sees approaching him a form of surpassing beauty. Her lips drop as a honey-comb, her mouth is smoother than oil. With face half-veiled, and eye radiant with the light of love; with smiles pleasant and changeful as the tinted clouds in summer-sunset sky, and robe glittering as the dress which morning throws over beds of flowers and spangled lawns,—she utters, in the melody of music, her winning words: I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows; therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. With much fair speech she causes him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forces him. He goeth after her straightway. For a time he revels in the bliss of his intoxication, until, wearied and exhausted, he turns aside from the giddy crowd, and seeks repose in the quiet of slumber. He wakes, at length, to look upon a scene so sadly changed that he can scarcely believe it to be real. He is surrounded now by the unholy and unclean, whose cheeks are never tinged with the blush of purity, whose countenances are fading under the blight of disease, whose eyes are burning in the fires of lust, whose mouths are open

sepulchres. Rushing upon his soul now, like a swift-coming tide, are the thoughts of a father's counsel, of a mother's warning voice, of a sister's love. He sighs for the innocence, the purity, the bliss of home. He would fain go back to the paths of his childhood. But, alas! he is swept on by a current that he cannot resist. Onward and downward with the living tide of pollution, he is borne until the house of death receives him, and the gates of hell open before him. And tell me—Oh tell me, if you can—what tongue has ever described the horrors of that living death, or the torments of that burning hell which awaits the licentious profligate! My young friend, pause, consider. Listen not to the lying words of the foolish woman. Heed rather the voice of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who has in mercy declared, Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths, for she hath cast down many wounded—yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

The way of the intemperate. This is another of the numerous paths which lead to present ruin and to eternal destruction. The probabilities that you may enter it are greatly strengthened by the fact that you will find at the outset of the way those whom the world has honored — men of commanding position and of intellectual might. The accomplished, the generous, the social—all—will win you by the prestige of their influence. The hand of beauty, perchance, will press to your lips the foaming bowl, which you dare not dash away. The tempter will whisper, "No evil can follow from association with such company. A short excursion in this way will enhance life's enjoyments. 'Live while you live,' and make the most of the passing hours. If dangers lurk along the path, they are nowhere within the range of my vision: and upon their first appearance it will be easy to retrace my steps. No poverty nor disease nor death are apparent; and if they spring out upon the traveller, like beasts of prey from their ambush, their hiding places must be far on at points which I shall never reach. The drunkard shall never be my companion, nor the drunkard's grave nor hell my portion." Trust not to these fancy dreams. The real evils which flow from the wine-cup have never yet been told; no human mind has ever fully compassed them, nor imagination painted them. You have read of gorgon horrors: of the transformation of men into swine, by Circe's potent spells; of harpies, whose touch was pollution; of Scylla and Charybdis, whose dismal caverns are whi-

tened with the bones of ill-starred mariners; of the Maelstrom, whose capacious maw, at one effort, could engulf whole navies; of Sin and Death as pictured by the poet; of Lucifer hurled from heaven, driven through dreary leagues of chaotic night, and stretched, a dragon huge, on his lake of quenchless fire. To these you may add all the monsters dire which the human fancy has created, and group the whole into one revolting picture: to this picture your terrified spirit would fly for relief, from the one imagining forth all the horrors of intemperance. There sits the Moloch monster, King Alcohol, with his eyes of fire, his teeth of iron, his arms of burning steel, his cannibal maw distended, but never filled, and smiles with grim and ghastly visage above his altar, reeking with human gore and pollution, upon the ruin which reigns throughout his wide domains. See in the distance that stately mansion; enter its gates; look behind those grates of iron—there is he whom the world honored; on whose lips listening senates hung entranced! He writhes in chains which humanity had placed upon him to mitigate his sufferings. And here is another house, whose walls and dungeons imprison felons of every grade, from the youthful culprit to the cold-blooded assassin. Here is a lazar-house, and there a gibbet, whose beam has just swung into eternity a youthful murderer! What train of weeping ones is this, clad in the weeds of widowhood, stricken and bowed with the anguish of years? They were once the wives, they are now the widows, of drunkards. With swollen eyes and faded cheeks and bleeding hearts they tread upon the brink of the grave. What countless multitudes of innocent little ones are there, in tatters and in filth—hatless, bonnetless, shoeless; haggard with hunger and pallid with disease? Their tiny feet patter over the frozen clods, until their pathway reddens with their trickling blood! These are the children of drunkards. But I cannot complete the picture. My tongue and voice grow tremulous in the work; my hand can no longer guide the pencil upon the canvas. Turn, young man, from this dimly-colored picture of living realities; fill up, if you can, and tinge, if you will, with burning hues, all the true scenes of misery that lie on either side of this path to hell. Then look across the broad way, and over the way of escape which leads to life; read in letters of light, radiant with heaven's own brightness, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright: at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

But the young are always too ready to believe that the perils of these paths of vice are by the more experienced greatly exaggerated. The danger lies, (as they suppose,) not in entering them, and in traveling in them for a time, but in continuing in them too long. True, some have made shipwreck of body and of soul by pursuing these courses too far, but as for us, we will be wary and watchful. Little acquainted with their own natures, with the fearful laws which God has thrown about their intellectual and moral being, with the power of temptation, or with the nature of habit, they rush on, in the firm persuasion that they are fully able, at any moment, to reverse their course. They know not the strength of the chain which habit has already thrown around them; they know it not, because they have never made an effort to sunder it. To the eye its threads are of gossamer, and will yield to the touch of youthful vigor. The lion, imprisoned behind the slender bars of iron, knows not that the little rods are stronger than his brawny arm, until he tries upon them his full power. In his native wilds he roams monarch of the forest, and in the pride of his strength looks scornfully upon the net which holds the tempting bait. His might can sever the meshes and snap the strands, should they compass him around, and with a bound he leaps upon the wished-for prize. The repast is ended, and he rises to his wonted haunts, but (alas for him!) the net has already enfolded him. Every effort of his stalwart limbs draws yet more closely the fatal cords around him, until, exhausted in the struggle, the king of beasts lays him down to die in the meshes which the tooth of a mouse might sunder. Would you know the strength of the cord which habit has already woven into the entire tissue of your physical and mental being? Bring against it all the force of your young manhood, and happy for you if you find in it the strength only of the seven green withes with which they bound the son of Manoah. Are you still confident of your power? are you an overmatch for the mighty Samson? He rent asunder the lion as he would have rent a kid; slew a thousand men of the Philistines single-handed, with no weapon but a bone for his club; parted the new ropes and green withes as a thread of tow when it toucheth the fire; bore off the huge beams of the house, to which he had been fastened by the hair of his head,—and yet you find, afterwards, this same Samson quietly sleeping upon the lap of his own loved Delilah, until the wicked woman, artfully stealing the seven wondrous locks, the secret of his strength, cries out, "The

Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" and he awakes to the consciousness that his power is gone, and himself betrayed into the hands of his enemies. And now see this mightiest of men! Reft of his eyes, and bound with fetters of brass, he doth grind like a galley-slave in the prison-house of the Philistines.

Trust not then, young men, to your own strength, nor to your own wisdom. Listen to the instructions of the wise, to the experience of age. Heed—Oh, heed!—the admonition of the text. If you would walk uprightly and purely, take heed to your steps, according to God's word. Fearful are the interests trembling this hour in the balance of your decision—interests affecting not only the present, but reaching far away into the cycles of eternity. I beseech you, by the counsels of an honored father; by the daily prayers of a loving mother, if she lives, or, if not, by the vows that you made when words of tenderness fell upon your ear for the last time from her dying lips, and which you have often renewed at her quiet grave, as the tears have fallen, like the rain-drops, upon the green-growing sod; I beseech you, by the love of God as shown in the abundance of his grace, by the blood of the Son of God, which paid the priceless cost of your redemption,—let not your feet decline towards the paths of sin. Choose rather, and follow, while you may, the way of life, which leads to usefulness and honor here, and to everlasting joys in Heaven.

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THE GOSPEL—ITS CHARACTER, REQUIREMENTS AND BLESSINGS.

BY THE REV. NELSON HEAD,
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"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom, also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—Eph. i, 13, 14.

What a precious treasure is the Bible! What a privilege to enjoy the free, unrestricted use of the oracles of our salvation! The Bible stands alone amidst the multiform literature of our world, as the Book of God. It is a revelation of God's personal existence and perfections. It contains an account of God's works. It furnishes a disclosure of God's plans. It is a repository of God's thoughts. It makes known to us the brightest expression, and sublimest proof, of God's love to our fallen world. Its treasures of instruction and consolation are inexhaustible. The more we study the Bible with humility and prayer, for divine teaching, the more we perceive in it to admire and to enjoy, to guide and to comfort us in our perilous pilgrimage to "the Saints' everlasting rest." The more we imbibe the spirit of the Bible, the more will the scope of faith's vision enlarge, the range of hope's expectations widen, and the image of God's eternal love be reflected from the depths of our moral and spiritual nature.

No part of the Bible should be neglected. History, prophecy, poetry—its doctrines, its ethical principles and precepts—have all a meaning, and all contain a good, and it is ours to enquire into the one, and appropriate the other. From this blessed book, it is our special duty, as "the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," to minister to the edification of God's Israel, and give warning and invitation, to the unconverted and unsaved. Paul's letter to the Ephesians furnishes the material for discourse, meditation and profit to-day. In this Epistle Paul seems to have poured out the very fulness of his inspired mind, and loving heart. Its

contents exhibit the most elevated conceptions, and eloquent expressions, of those things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Here we have sublimest doctrines, most spiritual truths, the purest precepts, loftiest privileges, kindest admonitions, and most inspiring encouragements. O, that we had eyes to perceive the beauties, ears to catch the celestial tones, and hearts to appreciate the riches of this Divine composition!

The passage which we have selected for our present use, is replete with instruction and comfort. In it we have the *character*, the *requirements*, and the *blessings* of the Gospel.

I. The *character* of the Gospel: "It is the word of truth, and the gospel of your salvation."

1. The Gospel is characterized by the Apostle as the "Word of truth." It is "the word" which "God spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets," and which he "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." The Gospel is not made up of the gleanings of human wisdom, and human investigations, and human opinions; it is a kind and faithful oracle, which has been communicated from the eternal throne of wisdom and love. It is "the word"—the special utterance of God. It is a revelation from the God and Father of all, to his lapsed creatures, bearing the impress of his paternal regards and solicitude, for the recovery of our revolted and wretched portion of his family. Its tones are clear, loving, authoritative, pathetic, and full. Truth is its subject-matter. But what kind of truth? It is truth diverse from all those truths which the human intellect hath ascertained, and in which it glories; and yet it contradicts no truth, but is in harmony with all truth. It is "the truth as it is in Jesus;" the "truth which is according to godliness;" it is the truth, whose foundation is Christ, fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; whose superstructure is Christ dying for our sins according to the Scriptures, and whose topstone is Christ head over all things, and head over all things to his church. The "word of truth" is the whole sum of Christianity, as revealed in the person, teaching, works and sufferings, resurrection and triumphs, of the Son of God. The truth which solves all the mysteries of our beings, dispels all doubt, as the infallible guide to the divinest wisdom. It is the standard by which all moral and religious truth must be finally tested. By it, all the moral and religious sentiments

of mankind must stand or fall; it eclipses all by its glory, transcends all by its majesty; sways all by its authority, and determines all by its decision. This is the truth after which the world has all along sighed and striven, since man's first transgression disrobed him of his innocency and purity, and perverted his whole nature into the darkness, guilt and misery of falsehood. Thus bereft of the sun of his moral and intellectual nature, man, apart from the word of God, has ever groped in ignorance and falsity, seeking in vain for the truth of which sin despoiled him. Even the most illumined and enlarged intellects, which rear their noble forms high above the less favored masses of humanity, have been doomed to confess, after all their painful enquiries, that the truth has still eluded their search. "You may see," says a Christian philosopher, "Socrates in the twilight lamenting his obscure and benighted condition, and telling you that his lamp will show him nothing but his own darkness. You may see Plato sitting down by the water of Lethe, and weeping because he could not remember his former notions. You may hear Aristotle bewailing himself thus—that his 'potential reason' will so seldom come into act, that his blank sheet has so few and such imperfect impressions upon it, that his intellectuals are at so low an ebb, as that the notions of Euripus will pose them. You may hear Zeno say that his 'porch' is dark; and Epictetus confessing and complaining that he had not the right 'handle,' the true apprehension of things." And as it has fared with the old philosophers, so has it fared with the new. They are alike blear-eyed, when untouched by the healing beams of "the Sun of Righteousness." But what the sage, the scribe, and the disputer of this world have sought for in vain, breaks upon the human mind, with all the splendor of a sunburst, from the firmament of gospel truth. The Gospel then is "the word of truth," because it contains, and makes known, truth, absolute truth, without any mixture of error or falsehood. It is that special truth which humanity needs, and after which it groans being burdened; and to which, when made known and appropriated, the deep, throbbing, oppressed heart of humanity responds in jubilant tones of praise and joy. Three beautiful words reveal this truth. These words are, "GOD IS LOVE." Hail, simple, yet sublime truth! Truth so simple, that the child can understand it; and yet so profound, so comprehensive, so sublime, that neither philosopher, divine, nor archangel, can comprehend or exhaust its living import. "God

is love." Of this glorious truth, the cross is at once its brightest expression and sublimest proof, salvation its unspeakable gift, and heaven the scene, and eternity the scope of its consummated beatitudes. Do you ask for the credentials of "the word of truth?" Go ask of history, as it expands into living reality, what the prophets' pen had so long antedated, on the pages of Holy Scripture. Go ask of the miracles of "the Great Teacher" of the truth, and the lame leaping, the blind seeing, the sick flushed with new health, the dead living, the waves turning to adamant as a pavement for his sacred feet—his own triumphant exit from the grave, and ascension into heaven—these are credentials of the word of truth. Go ask of the moral triumphs, which the word of truth hath achieved along the centuries of the past, over the barbarism, idolatry, superstition, falsehood, sin, and wretchedness of man, and learn from their response, the credentials of the truth. Nay, go no further than your own moral consciousness, for you *must* feel *there*, that the Gospel is the word of truth—divine, eternal truth, that flashes light through the densest darkness of your nature, condemning your sins, and pointing you to your only remedy: this it does by its own self-evidencing power. Thus attested, and instinct with the resources of Omnipotence, the truth "must stand when rolling years shall cease to move." And as it rises higher and higher in the firmament of this world's history, all that is darkened with error and falsehood, in governments, both civil and ecclesiastical, in institutions, in literature, creeds and forms, must fade away; and as it culminates in its meridian splendor, the nations shall shout the long-expected jubilee, and hail the universal establishment of the kingdom of truth. Then shall "the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

2. The Gospel is not only "the word of truth," but also "the gospel of your salvation." The Gospel is as benevolent as it is true. It comes not only to shed the effulgence of certitude on all those great subjects which lie at the basis of man's highest interests, but also to release mankind from the burdens of sin and woe which had for ages crushed their energies, darkened their hopes, and saddened their hearts. It is a Gospel which proclaims "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men." It freely offers, as it abundantly provides, salvation to the lost, and heaven to the exiled posterity of Adam. It tells of the Father, that he "sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world

through him might be saved." It tells of the Son, that he came to seek and to save that which was lost; and declares, that "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And it tells you, also, of the Holy Spirit, that he should come into the world, to convince it of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come; and that it is his special province to enlighten, regenerate, comfort and sanctify you, that you may be made "meet for an inheritance among the saints in light." Truly then does the Apostle describe the Gospel as "the gospel of your salvation." It reveals the whole Trinity in unity engaged in the work of saving you. And, surely, the work which engages the entire Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, must be a work of matchless grandeur and blessedness. And such undoubtedly is the work which achieves a sinner's salvation. What difficulties are surmounted in this work! The eternal rectitude of the government of God was opposed to it. But this was brought into harmony with it. The incarnation of the Son of God, by his life, which was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," and by his humiliation "unto death, even the death of the cross," magnified the law, and made it honorable, and fully satisfied the claims of Divine rectitude and justice. And in saving the sinner, "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." The perverted, blind, depraved, and hostile nature of man himself is against it. But this resistance, stubborn and mighty as it is, is met and overcome by those elements of superior power which are embodied in the Gospel of the grace of God. Satan, and his manifold agencies, are opposed to it. But "greater is he that is for us, than all that can be against us." How do these difficulties and oppositions serve to heighten our conceptions of the glory of that Gospel, which wields principles and powers by which they may all be overcome, and God glorified in the sinner's salvation? But look at the salvation itself. What does it do for the sinner? It comes to you beaming with light and robed in celestial loveliness. It solves all the anxious solicitudes of your souls, when awakened to a keen perception of the wrongs which you have done to God. It cancels your guilt. It pardons your iniquities. It breaks the bond of your old sinful servitude, and leads you forth into the liberty of the Sons of God. It calms all your mental disquietudes, and breathes over you the balmy atmosphere of peace. It purifies, strengthens, and restores you to the image of God. It

makes the whole sphere and scope of your being bright and joyous with the hope of the glory that shall be revealed. Such, and more than words can express, is the salvation which the Gospel proclaims as the work that engages the tireless energies of the ever-blessed Trinity. Well might the Apostle exult in such a Gospel, saying: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This Gospel is indeed good news; for wherever it comes, it is the bearer of the tidings of salvation—the most truthful and cheering tidings that ever fell on mortal ears. These are the tidings which hush the wailings of despair; raise the downcast eye of conscious guilt, and send the pulsations of new life and joy into the crushed and woe-stricken heart of humanity. What then is our Gospel? Is it a mere system of high doctrines and mysteries, inviting the investigations of the learned? Is it a mere repository of dogmas, for the use of creed-mongers; or is it merely a spacious firmament of brilliant truths, sparkling and beautiful, to be gazed at with delight and admiration? No, no, my brethren. The Gospel is the glorious proclamation from heaven, that sinners may be saved through the finished work of the Mediator, Christ Jesus our Lord. This is its grand characteristic. This is its sublime mission. And in this, it is peerless and alone. Its tones of mercy and deliverance to man, sound from no other quarter of the universe. The good news of salvation radiates from no orb of the sky; it is announced from no region of scientific discovery; philosophy in all its depths and in all its heights never struck its key-note; "the depth saith it is not in me; and the sea saith it is not in me;" but it is voiced out from the Gospel, in tones full and sweet, like the singing of angels; and free, like the atmosphere that enwraps the globe. Hear it, ye nations! Hear it, all ye people who are ready to perish. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. The *requirements* of the Gospel. "After that *ye heard* the word of truth—in whom also after that *ye believed*."

1. The Gospel requires that it be *heard*. And is not this a most reasonable requirement? If there be any sound—any proclamation which rightfully demands the listening ear of mortal man—it is the

sound of the Gospel. Is the utterance of truth on any grave question, involving the property, reputation, liberty and lives of men, or the stability of nations, worthy of being heard with profound attention? How much more so, "the word of truth." By its announcements, questions infinitely more momentous than ever trembled in the balance of senatorial debate, or judicial decision, are solved and determined beyond any further appeal. Those great questions concerning God, the soul, life and death—eternal life and eternal death—tremble in the balance which is swayed by the oracles of Gospel truth. What then can so much merit your serious and attentive hearing? Does the proclamation of health to the sick, freedom to the captive, joy to the sorrowing, or life to the dead, receive the tribute of an eager audience, from those subjects of pain and wretchedness? Then how should you regard "the Gospel of your salvation?" You are diseased, it offers you health; you are in bondage, it offers you liberty; you are the subjects of manifold sorrows, which earth cannot cure, it offers you "a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear;" you are dead to all the higher and nobler ends of your being, it offers you life. Surely then if there is one duty pressing upon you—one privilege which you ought with eager hand to grasp—it is the duty, the privilege, of hearing the Gospel. And yet how lamentably true is it, that scarcely any sound is less heeded than this heavenly proclamation, by the thoughtless and guilty multitudes, who are hurrying through their brief and uncertain existence upon earth. Your ears are open to every passing tale that is told, eager to drink in the news of the day, whether of personal, social, political, or commercial matters. Lectures on the fine arts, literature, science, and even on subjects of ridicule and mirth, are listened to with marked interest and attention, and made the themes, afterwards, of earnest conversation. What multitudes, also, lend their ears, night after night, to the feigned exhibitions of the stage. And yet all these things together, with any interest you may have in them, are limited by the seen and the temporal; while some of them are opposed alike to the interests of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. But where is the eager, attentive, appreciative ear, when the word of truth is declared, and when the Gospel pours forth the melody of its glad tidings, offering rest to the weary, pardon to the guilty, holiness to the impure, and heaven to the exiled sons and daughters of men?

When the Gospel is preached, purely, simply, God speaks to you words of truth and grace by which you may be saved. How reasonable, how solemn, how urgent, then, the duty of hearing it! "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Hear it attentively, and you will receive instruction in the way of life. Hear it, honestly desiring to know what is the truth, and it will flash the light of conviction into your dark understandings and consciences. Hear it with an humble, reverent prayer, that it may bring to you a message of mercy, and it will reveal Christ to your inmost soul, as "the way, the truth, and the life." May you so hear it now! Not long since two of the mightiest nations on the globe paused, and bent their ears to catch the first notes of mutual congratulation, as they were borne on the tongue of lightning, through the waters of the broad Atlantic. And will you not hush your souls into stillness, bid all your passions be quiet, while your Almighty Father, King of kings, and Lord of lords, stoops from the throne of his glory, and in all the melting majesty of love, proclaims to you "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation?" O, who will not say, Be still! let every earthly sound be hushed: it *is* my Father's voice! lo! my elder brother speaks! "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

"Send some message from thy word,
That may peace and joy afford."

2. The second requirement of the Gospel furnishes an answer to the all-absorbing question, which the right hearing of the truth ever suggests and awakens. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "In whom after that *ye believed*." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." But what is it to believe? On this subject many words darken counsel. It is not so much the philosophy of the act, as the act itself, which concerns you. Yet its philosophy, like all the philosophy of heaven, is simplicity itself. Do you still ask what it is to believe? We reply, it is the "flight of a penitent sinner unto the mercy of God in Christ." Make an honest effort to perform the *act*, and the Holy Ghost will explain its import. Remember it is faith in Christ which the Gospel requires. You have "the word of truth," and you should hear it, ponder on it, believe it, and receive its convicting power in your consciences; but you should not trust in it, as a mere revelation of truth. You have the gospel of your salvation, and

you should hail t with joy, study it, embrace it, as the only disclosure of God's method of saving sinners. But if you stop here, you stop short of salvation. The Gospel receives all its significance and importance—its very character and substance as a Gospel—from the person, the work, and the sacrifice of Jesus, to whom it points as the only ground of a sinner's hope, and the sole object of a sinner's faith. He it is, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This, then, is the grand requirement of the Gospel—BELIEVE. Wonderful word! What power resides in it, what a crisis in human existence does it produce; what countless blessings does it secure! It fixes the soul on the everlasting love of God in Christ, as the foundation of its pardon, adoption, and regeneration. It gives to the soul a living, felt, joyous interest in the aim and end of the redeeming work of the Son of God, which is eternal life, derived from God and perfected in him. It is the fruitful source of a holy and beautiful life, in conformity to the lovely life of Jesus. Believe in Christ, and you are one with him. And in this blessed union the whole Godhead smiles on you, and invests your being and destiny with divine dignity and splendor. Such being the simplicity, power, and efficacy of faith in Christ, marvelous indeed is the unbelief of man! I know that the pride of philosophy, and the pride of self-righteousness, have ever stumbled at this word—*believe*. But that pride must bow, or the soul it swells must die. Reason, philosophy, science, and largest learning, must bring all their boasted treasures, and lay them at the foot of the cross, and count them but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord—that Christ may be won. Morality, with its noblest traits and most generous deeds, must disrobe itself and appear in its naked deformity, that it may seek, like Paul, "to be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." But why do I prolong your attention to this evangelical word, *believe*? It is that you may even *now* realize its sublime import in your hearts. Come, then, all guilty, polluted, wretched and undone, as you are, and "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

"Believe in Him, who died for thee;
And sure as He has died,
Thy debt *is* paid, thy soul *is* free,
And thou *art* justified."

Here you may lay off the sackcloth and ashes, and in a garment pure and white, standing hard by the cross, with your eye of faith resting on the slain Lamb of God, tune your harp and sing:

"All praise to the Lamb! accepted I am,
Through faith in the Saviour's adorable name;
In Him I confide, His blood is applied;
For me He hath suffered, for me He hath died.

"Not a doubt doth arise, to darken the skies,
Or hide for a moment, my Lord from mine eyes:
In Him I am blest, I lean on His breast,
And, lo! in His wounds I continue to rest."

III. The *blessings* of the Gospel. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

1. The first gospel blessing, as indicated in the text, is that of our being "sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise." Here is a blessed agent, and a blessed act. The agent is "the Holy Spirit of promise." He it is, by whom the work of salvation is wrought *in*, and made manifest *to* the soul. Hence our spiritual renovation is said to be effected "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." He is the third person of the triune Godhead, and as such, proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is his high prerogative, in the economy of our redemption, to re-edify the fallen temple of the human soul, to re-adorn it with the beauties of holiness, and to fill it with the Divine presence and glory. He is called the "Spirit of promise," because he is the prominent subject of many of the promises announced by the prophets of the old economy. He was also promised by Christ to his disciples. For before Christ was glorified the Spirit was to the church a promised gift. For this promise the church waited, and with this promised gift the waiting church was baptized, and mightily endowed for the fulfillment of her mission in the world. For the largest fulfillment of this promise, the church still waits; and O, that she would, in faith and earnest, united, pleading prayer, then would another Pentecost come, and a nation be born in a day!

But what is the act, which is here ascribed to the Holy Spirit, and which constitutes for the child of God so rich a blessing? It is the act of *sealing* them. The use of seals, to which the Apostle refers, was to impress a mark on an object, so as to designate it as the property of him whose seal it bore. Thus the Holy Spirit seals those who have believed, by impressing upon them the image of God, thereby designating them as the peculiar people and property of God, enlisting in their behalf the special interest and regards of God. The Spirit's seal hath on it this motto, "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The seal of the Spirit is not only an objective designation, but also a subjective assurance that we are God's people; the objects of his peculiar interest and favor. It is a part of the Spirit's work to make our reconciliation and adoption sure to us. Wherever he dwells as a sealing Spirit, there he is as the Spirit of adoption, crying in our hearts, Abba! Father!

What a rich blessing is this! to be designated, marked, sealed as the peculiar people and property of God, and to be inwardly assured that we are his, and are entitled to all the present and prospective immunities of his heavenly household. And all this, not by the fallible deductions of our own reason; the declarations of an erring priesthood, nor the appliances of ecclesiastical forms and ceremonies, but by the infallible Spirit of God himself. The Holy Spirit first produces in us the new creation after the image of God, then sheds a clear, steady light on his own work, by which we are assured that we are the children of God, and heirs of God, and joint heirs with his Son Jesus Christ. This is the blessed religious experience which the Bible inculcates, which true faith realizes, which God acknowledges, before which the clouds of earthly affliction grow bright, death loses its sting, and the grave its victory. My brethren, this I call a great, a glorious Gospel blessing. What think you? Is it not so? I know that you are accustomed to place a very high estimate on the assured favor of those whom you regard as important to your temporal well-being. You know if you are in want they will help you; if you are in danger they will screen you; if you are perplexed they will guide you. They may be wealthy, strong, and wise; and you know they love you. What a cheerful light does the assurance of their love and favor throw around your earthly life! But what is the favor of man compared with the favor of God? A thousand

circumstances may intervene, and cause the aid of those on whom you rely, to fail you just at the period of your greatest need. But can God fail? Can circumstances affect him? Is he not "a friend that sticketh closer than any brother?" Can his wealth be exhausted, or his strength be weakened, or his wisdom be nonplused? Then, if you are sealed as his property, and assured of his proprietorship in you as one of his peculiar people, you may rejoice and be glad, for thou hast a friend adequate to every possible emergency. And he says to thee—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" so that thou mayest boldly say, "the Lord is my helper."

2. The other great blessing which follows faith in Christ, is the "earnest of our inheritance." An earnest is a part of the purchase money already paid down, to confirm the contract, and as a pledge that the whole amount shall be forthcoming in due time. This word the Apostle uses in a figurative sense, to represent the work already wrought in the heart of the believer, in relation to its future completion at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The import of this "earnest" is, that grace is incipient glory, and glory shall complete what grace has begun. This representation of the work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, has a special value, as it serves to give a kind of definiteness to our ideas of the heavenly inheritance. Much of the gorgeous picturing of heaven which we sometimes read and hear, fails in vividness of impression and urgency of motive to our souls, because it is composed of features and hues to which there is nothing correspondent in the present realizations of our experience. But when we speak of a heaven on whose loveliness you have already gazed, of whose fruits you have already had a foretaste, and into whose fellowship you have already entered, then the shadowy gives place to the real, the indefinite to the distinct, the foreign to the familiar; then the land that is afar off is brought nigh, and the visions, the love, the purity, the high services, holy fellowships, and the sublime enjoyments of heaven, are antedated by the "earnest of our inheritance," which is heaven in miniature, and which all who have believed, and are partakers of the Holy Ghost, possess and enjoy, even in this vale of tears. You have now the disquietudes of your hearts calmed by "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" and what is this but a foretaste of that deep, sweet, unbroken calm, which is forever settled upon the paradise of God? Already are you changed into the image of Jesus—"from glory to

glory as by the Spirit of the Lord;" and is not this the beginning of that perfection which consists in your complete transformation into the image of God, and which is one of the brightest radiances of the celestial glory? John tells us of the blessedness that shall crown us, that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Have you not in this, the land of your pilgrimage, some of those ravishing delights and elevated joys, which are forever in the presence, and at the right hand of God? "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In these works and fruits of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel blesses the believer with an earnest of his future heaven. These are the grapes of Eschol, which tell me how goodly a land my Canaan is. These are streaks of immortality breaking through the intervening veil, and kindling for me the beginnings of heaven upon earth. And if all this be but an "earnest," which is, as Chrysostom explains it, "a part of the whole," then what must that "whole" be? It will be these precious buds bursting into full blown flowers; these lovely streaks of the morning dawn melting into the splendor of meridian day. It will be my present knowledge, freed from its dimsightedness and uncertainty; my present holiness made stainless like the holiness of God; my present enjoyments expanding into all the perfection of bliss, of which my glorified nature shall be capable. And all this to be realized in that "new heaven and new earth," where sin shall never be, with its defilements and its curse; where there are no seeds of corruption to work decay, and whose bloom and beauty shall be immortal in their tints and hues of loveliness and splendor.

And this earnest is ours "until the redemption of the purchased possession." By the purchased possession, here, you are not to understand heaven, or your eternal blessedness, but the collective people of God, whom he hath purchased by the precious blood of Jesus as His own peculiar treasure. And by the redemption of this purchased possession, is meant the final restoration, when the graves shall give up their dead, and the whole family of God shall be presented faultless and complete before His throne. Of that glorious period of "the manifestation of the sons of God" Paul speaks in another place, and says of those who have the fruits of the Spirit, "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." When the trumpet

that heralds the second advent of our Lord shall sound its blast upon the ear of the universe, then shall the slumbering dust of his saints hear his voice, and come forth, in new and beautiful forms, fashioned like unto his glorious body, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal; robed in flashing sunbeams, fit abodes and organs for "the spirits of just men made perfect." Then shall be the redemption of the purchased possession; then shall the "earnest" be absorbed in the full "inheritance." Then for the foretaste, you shall have the rich and royal banquet. For then, the shout shall be heard, as the sound of many waters: "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

"Yes, the prize shall soon be given;
We his open face shall see:
Love the earnest of our heaven,
Love our full reward shall be:
Love shall crown us
Kings through all eternity."

My brethren and fellow heirs of immortality, what is this Gospel to you? Has it given truth to your understandings, and salvation to your souls? Have you heard it with due interest, reflection and prayer? Have you believed in the Christ to whom it points you, as your only and all-sufficient Saviour? Have you the seal of God impressed upon your inmost souls? Have you, in the peace, the purity, and the gladness of your hearts, the earnest of your future heaven? Can you answer these questions affirmatively? if so, then I hail you, ye blessed people of the Lord! Learn to prize this Gospel more highly every day of your lives. You will never reach that point of progression in this life, at which you will be beyond the need of this grand old Gospel. Make it, then, more and more *your* Gospel every day of your existence. Study it; pray over it; adorn it; commend it. Breathe in its atmosphere. Drink of its living waters. Feast upon its heavenly manna. Thus shall ye grow up into a moral manhood, like unto Christ your living head. Thus pass a few interchanging days and nights, and then—

"The joyful news will come,
Child, your Father calls, come home."

But if you are unable to claim the blessings of the Gospel as a

present possession, what shall I say to you? What can I say, that has not been said a thousand times before? And yet, blessed be God, I have an abiding faith in the simple, old story of the cross. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," why may not that faith so come to you this day? Think of your sins, how deep their dye; how ponderous their weight of guilt; how revolting in the sight of your immaculate God; how deep the damnation they deserve. Think of the love that bled and died, in the person of the holy and loving Jesus, that your sins might not cleave as a withering curse to your souls forever. And can you thus ponder, and not turn and live? Behold the cross! Hear as from the quivering, dying lips of your crucified Lord and Saviour, these gladly solemn words: "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." One look! One glance of the eye of living faith, and thou art justified, and hast peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May God grant you this grace for his name's sake. AMEN.

H. N. McTyeire

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE:

Or, State of the Soul between Death and the Resurrection.

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"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. xi, 39, 40.

No one has yet been saved in heaven: no one sent to hell. These states and conditions will not be awarded till the judgment; and it will not take place till the resurrection.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment." God has also "appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." "That man" has described to us the order and awful glory of "that day." It is future—how far off, we know not. Meantime, death reigns. For six thousand years men have been dying. What of the souls of the departed? What of all who have died, and who shall die between this day and the last?

No vain or irreverent curiosity inquires here. A state so near, so certain, concerns us all. The soul would explore before entering "the land of darkness, as darkness itself." We look, we cannot help looking in that direction. That long interval between death and the judgment, how is it spent, and where? Reflection upon such themes sobers and chastens us; brings worldly thoughts to a solemn pause; lessens the dread of death; introduces us to edifying communion with the things which are not seen, and kindles gratitude and love to Him to whom we owe these lively hopes.

This chapter recites the names and deeds of heroes and heroines of faith: their noble epitaph—"Of whom the world was not worthy." After obeying, suffering and illustrating their service, they died; but the promise, in its fullness, was still ahead; the "rest," the "heavenly country," the "city prepared by God"—all, all lay before them.

No salvation is perfected under the Mediatorial dispensation, until that dispensation is consummated. The Mediator must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet by conversion or subjection. Death, the last enemy, must be destroyed; his bands be broken, his pains loosed, and every grave opened and emptied. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . . . Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

This Mediatorial sovereignty is distinct from that which he shares, as the Son, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the essential unity of Godhead. It was delegated for a time and a purpose. All power was given unto him, in heaven and earth; head over all things to the church. When he has brought sons and daughters to glory—saved his church, then, except so far as his reign is with and over them, his mediatorial sovereignty may end—be merged in the original and eternal sovereignty which he has as God the Son, with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost.

Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs have gone before; we shall overtake *them;* others *us*; and the communion of saints be enjoyed in being perfected together. There are advantages in an advance position. To have "the ends of the world come upon us," is not without *its* advantages. Our times are in God's hand; he has distributed and disposed of us well. Let us be thankful for the times we live in. The redeemed in Jesus Christ are one family. They bear one family name, and are bound up in one covenant and fate, from righteous Abel to the last praying, trusting, self-renouncing Christian who shall die in the Lord.

> "One family we dwell in him,
> One church above, beneath—
> Though now divided by the stream,
> The narrow stream of death."

Chrysostom has remarked on the text: "*Still* they had not received it, *still* they waited for it, even after they had ended their life in such tribulation. So much time had passed after their victory, and still they had not received it! And should we sigh because we stand yet in the conflict? Remember what is said, that Abraham and the Apostle Paul sit and *wait*, until thou art made perfect. Until we come, has the Saviour said, he will not give the reward to

them; just as a tender father would say to his good sons who had finished their work, 'I will give you to eat when your brother also comes.' The Lord does no wrong to them, but he does honor to us."

Of the state of the dead during the interval between death, the dissolution of soul and body, and the resurrection, when soul and body are re-united forever, the three opinions most seriously entertained, are:

1. An unconscious state. To one dead, time is of no note; nothing to mark it by: no scenes, no moving bodies, no succession of ideas. The grave is without a dial-plate. Hence, like a dream in the night, it will seem but a moment between closing the eyes in death and awaking to judgment.

This cheerless theory involves a subtile distinction between real and apparent time not to be attributed to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul's willingness to be "absent from the body," in which he was so useful to the churches and the brethren, was in view of the happiness—not of vital suspension, but of being "present with the Lord." The reverse was, "at home in the body—absent from the Lord." The Apostle, in his earthly presence, was fully alive, conscious. Moses and Elias had been sometime dead when seen and communed with on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus encouraging the dying thief—"This day," etc.—meant what he said.

2. Souls go immediately to heaven or hell. This view has many difficulties. For the present, hear Mr. Wesley:* "'The beggar died'—here ended poverty and pain—'and was carried by angels'—nobler servants than any that attended the rich man—'into Abraham's bosom;' so the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles paradise; the place where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest; the receptacle of holy souls from death to the resurrection. It is indeed very generally supposed that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God. . . . . Paradise is not heaven. It is indeed (if we may be allowed the expression) the antechamber [elsewhere, 'porch'] of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain till, after the general judgment, they are received into glory."

3. A conscious interval, which all shall pass through, except those found on the earth at the second coming of Christ. There is a place

* Sermon on Dives and Lazarus.

for our bodies, so also there is a receptacle for our souls, during their separation. This spirit-world receives all who depart; good and bad, small and great, old and young. The Hebrew original of the Old Testament calls it *sheol*, which the Greek translation of the Septuagint renders *hades*. The Greek original of the New Testament calls it *hades*, which the Latin Vulgate renders *infernus*. The English translation of the Old Testament and of the New, sometimes renders it *hell*, sometimes *grave*.

Here, in *sheol*, *hades*, the souls of all who die are received, without respect to their goodness or badness, their happiness or misery. It is a temporary abode. But they abide not together. There is a gulf fixed, a great gulf and impassable, between Dives and Lazarus, and all who fall respectively into their classes. Here are not only separations, but joys and sorrows; for these affections are not confined to the body.

With this agree particular words, texts and the tenor of Scripture.

An eminent biblical critic* observes that *gehenna*, a word occurring just twelve times in the New Testament, means the place of torment reserved for the punishment of the wicked in a future state. In ten of these there can be no doubt; in the other two, the expression, if figurative, is taken from that state of misery which awaits the impenitent, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Another word, *hades*, occurs frequently in the Old Testament, and in eleven places in the New. In the New Testament it is translated *hell*, in all places except one, (1 Cor. xv. 55,) where it is translated *grave*. *Hades* is not only frequently used by the Seventy, but it is common among classical authors; and in the judgment of the critic quoted, and others, it ought never in Scripture be rendered *hell*, at least in the sense wherein this word is now universally understood among Christians. In translating the Hebrew word *sheol*, the Seventy almost invariably used *hades*; both meaning the state of the dead in general—the invisible, the hidden, the veiled land.

Jacob, hearing of the probable and melancholy fate of Joseph—"I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." According to his fears, Joseph was not in a grave, much less the family burial-place, where his own dust would mingle with his beloved son's. He had despairingly pronounced—"An evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." Afterwards, his sons expos-

* George Campbell, (1758,) Dissertations

culating with their father about sending Benjamin into Egypt with them—"Then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." In both texts, *grave* is in the Septuagint *hades*, in the Hebrew *sheol*. Shocking as it might seem, there would have been as much reason to translate it *hell* in both, as in Psalm xvi, 10, where David prophecies of Christ—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hell;* neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The words are the same. (So Isa. v, 14; xiv, 19. Ps. cxxxix, 8.) Besides, continues our critical authority, we have another clear proof from the New Testament, that *hades* denotes the intermediate state of souls between death and the general resurrection. In Revelations (xx, 14) we read that *death* and *hades*—by our translators rendered *hell*, as usual—shall, immediately after the general judgment, "be cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death." In other words, the death which consists in the separation of soul and body, and the receptacle of disembodied spirits shall be no more. *Hades* shall be emptied, death abolished. But interpret *hades hell* in the Christian acceptation, and you have *hell* represented as being cast into *hell!*

An ancient and much used form of the Apostles' creed delivers that Christ being crucified, *was dead, buried and descended into hell.* Not into *gehenna*, there with the devil and his angels to perfect his passion or complete his atonement; that was "finished," proclaimed so, and accepted, when he died on the Cross, commending his sinless spirit into his Father's hands. But that he, after death, entered into *hades*, we may well believe.

Our Lord Jesus was very man—not in appearance only; he lived, he died; really went through all the phases of our humanity, living, dying, and post-mortem. He skipped no essential passage of the nature he had taken on him, not even from the womb. Through some, he went more rapidly than we may go. His soul and body were parted by death; the body was laid in Joseph's new tomb; the soul went, as every other departed soul, into *hades*. It did not abide there long, but returned and reanimated the body, before in the course of nature the latter had seen corruption. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, applies David's prophecy—"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, [*sheol, hades,*] neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"—to Jesus, and from it justifies his speedy resurrection. From the land of spirits his soul was to be the "first fruits," as was his body from the sepulchre. His soul was

first to come out of *hades* and enter heaven with his glorified body. As among the living he had manifested his divinity and mission, so he proclaimed by his presence among the millions of faithful spirits, that the atonement *was* accomplished, and bore to the happy prisoners of hope the joyful tidings that the seed of the woman *had* bruised the serpent's head. Faith's expectation had been fulfilled. The desire of nations—the object of their prophecies and prayers, of their hopes and sacrifices, had come. He had found a ransom; nothing had failed.

In view of this Lamb of God, the Church in all previous dispensations had been accepted. His prospective atonement was their hope. Could they have witnessed the temptation in the wilderness, when Satan thrust sorely at the second Adam, that he might fall and redemption fail in him; could they have known of his agony in the garden, when, at the approach of the awful hour for which he came into the world, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, it might pass from him, and the shrinking flesh for a moment—only a moment—seemed to put away the cup of expiation for the sins of men—then they might have feared. But he has appeared and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He has cancelled the debt. Paradise, with all its joys, must have known a higher joy then. And his departure thence was the announcement that he had the keys of hades and death.

The thief on the Cross was promised—"This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Jesus kept the appointment. That very day, doubtless—and it was far spent when the word was spoken—the soul of the penitent sinner was with him in paradise, a trophy of redemption. Three days after this promise, Mary is at the Lord's sepulchre weeping. He has risen. He speaks. She recognizes and would worship him. Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." After that, and in their sight, he was carried up "into heaven:" ascended, and sat down on the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. If Jesus making his word good, was with the soul of the thief in paradise on the day of the crucifixion, and three days after it had not ascended into heaven, paradise and heaven are not the same place. In paradise the soul of the penitent sinner was left; his body has seen

corruption. When the trumpet sounds, and death and hades deliver up those in them, he shall come forth with others.

So much for the literal meaning of *hades*, which, as has been shown, implies properly neither *hell* nor the *grave*, but the place or state of departed souls. Created spirits are not omnipresent, but bounded by space, and may even take form—perhaps human, or fairer than human—though invisible to mortal eyes. Place, habitation, may therefore be assigned them.

Consistently, Samuel, in his apparition to wicked and God-forsaken Saul, speaks on this wise: "To-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me." Not that Samuel the prophet, and Saul the apostate, were congenial characters, and had the same portion after death, yet both on the morrow, were in the spirit-world, as they both had been in this world. Of the wicked kings and of the pious kings of Israel, it is alike written, that, after their decease, they were gathered unto and slept with their fathers.

Otherwise, a consequence cannot be escaped that makes the Judgment Day too empty to be solemn or too uncertain to be just. All Scripture attests but one Judgment. The time is set—"a day," "that day," "the day of Jesus Christ," "the day of Judgment," "the day of God." The most frequent and eminent and emphatic designation is "that day;" as of a day whose import and certainty were well understood. It is the *last* day, and the judgment will be *universal*. Then every one receives a final and everlasting destiny. But if as fast as men die they are sent to heaven or hell, that day is only for the very small portion of the human race alive at its coming. Or will those sentenced to hell, *gehenna*, for thousands of years, and who have been suffering its torments, be brought to a second trial? Is there probability or possibility of reversal of the first sentence? must be, if the form is serious. If reversal follow upon their second judgment, they were unjustly dealt by in the first. Or are they only brought out to be remanded again? No adequate purpose is served. We read of a "second death," never of a second judgment. And the righteous, must they leave their heaven—for what? To be put in jeopardy of their crowns, and tremble at a capricious administration? The Scriptures lead us clear of all such incongruities and absurdities.

Jesus has gone to prepare a place for his people, and will come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is they may be.

Whither he has gone we know, and the way we know. The heaven must receive him until the restitution of all things. But we look for him. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time unto salvation." Without any signs of sin-offering or humiliation he will come—come in glory: his second coming and the general judgment contemporaneous. May we have boldness in that day!

Jesus has not made known the time, but he has the order of the judgment of the last great day:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.'

The righteous and the wicked hear their sentence together; hear it for the first time. Singly or collectively, the "blessed" of the Father have never entered upon the inheritance before. The last shall enter with the first, "that they without us should not be made perfect."

When Jesus exhorted his followers to charity, he added, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Again, "At the end of the world"—not before—"shall the righteous shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." St. John declares, "When he doth appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Till then, it is enough to be assured that we are the sons of God. St. Paul encouraging persecuted Christians—

"And to you who are troubled, [God will recompense] rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels: In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all of them that believe in that day."

Christ was our pattern—the first fruits of them that slept. The foremost and preëminent position belongs to him, by necessity and by nature, and is carefully guarded in the Scriptures. Others were raised from the dead before him, but to a mortal life, not to die no more. Death claimed them afterwards, and they died like other men. They had only a respite from the grave. Corruption did not put on incorruption, this mortal immortality, in their cases. But the resurrection of Jesus was real, and the first of human nature. He did not enter heaven without a glorified body. We cannot. Enoch may have been translated in the patriarchal, and Elias in the prophetic dispensation, for a purpose. Saved from seeing death, as others see it and undergo it, their bodies may have been buried by God, as he buried Moses' body, no man knoweth where or how. But the body of each is a seed sown somewhere, that has not yet been raised "in glory" and "in power." Without spiritual, glorified bodies, none shall enter heaven; and even with such bodies, *they* could not have entered, for that would have inverted the order: the Head before the members. "But every man in his own order. Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming." The sheaf of "the first fruits," severed from the ripening crop, was the pledge and earnest of the coming harvest, and consecrated it, apart, in advance: this is the rank and order of Jesus. We shall rise because he did—rise like him—rise after him. The *order* is a material part of the fact.

Of the two cases which seem, at first, to stand in the way, well has

it been observed, that "it is most probable that Moses was with Elias as well before as upon the mount; nor is there any reason to conceive that Abraham should be in any worse place or condition than Enoch was, having as great a 'testimony that he pleased God' as Enoch had."

No change of character in this disembodied state, in this spirit-land. In hades is no dispensation for making men better who were bad here. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The things *done in the body* are to form the basis of judgment. This life is given unto men to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. This is the day of salvation; secure it now or never. After death, judgment, and judgment proceeds upon and reflects on the life that went before death—that only. No amendment, no conversion is provided for between death and the judgment. Character is fixed then, though destiny be not pronounced. Hence, correctly it may be said of one dying in his sins—he has gone to hell. Gone, beyond grace and effectual prayer. Gone, beyond remedy. He which is filthy must be filthy still. Gone, gone to hell. Work while it is day; the night cometh. Do this work of salvation now, and with thy might, "for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Ye unholy who enter there, leave hope behind.

Likewise, when the righteous die, we may safely say, not only that they rest from their labors, but by anticipation that they have gone to heaven. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come; *he shall enter into peace.*" No temptations, no lapses beyond the grave; he that endures till then, endures to the end of probation, and a crown is his. He that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die; he that believeth, though he die, yet he shall live; but he that dieth in unbelief shall neither believe nor live.

Happiness and woe in this middle state. It is a low and unworthy conception that, apart from the body, there is no susceptibility of pain or pleasure. When material conditions are most favored here, there may be unutterable anguish. Torments are there, of which the natural body in flames without mitigation, conveys some idea. There remorse, deathless worm, preys. There passions are let loose upon

their victim sharpened and unrestrained. Tribulation and anguish are there, foretastes of judgment.

> "Tortured with keen despair, they cry
> Yet wait for fiercer pains."

These torments have one mitigation—they are not hell, *gehenna*, with the devil and his angels; that is to come. The malefactor, condemned in his own heart and imprisoned, awaits the day of doom.

> "Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell; hope never comes
> That comes to all."

If final sentence were immediately meted out, men would not be prepared, unless God gave an insight into the future, to estimate the evil done, and to acquiesce. Let their works follow after and results work out; let the slow unfolding seeds of evil produce their harvest. While the day of wrath approaches they are tormented with the accumulating consequences of their wickedness. It is a growing account, after death, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Dives not only laments, but prays. He prays for others. Hear the requests of a lost soul: Failing of any, the least succor for himself, and assured that it was hopelessly impossible—

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren: that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

It is counted a sign of grace to be interested for the salvation of others. Whence this solicitude? Not gracious, but selfish—purely selfish. As his life had been wasted in social pleasures, he *remembered* his influence upon those brethren, in setting them in the ways of hell. He dreads to meet them at their coming, as heaping up more wrath, and sinking deeper one already lost.

Let the impenitent know that their repentance is a matter of solicitude to lost spirits, as well as to angels. *For our sake*, they would say, if their deprecating tones could reach your ears, *Come not also into this place of torment.* Go to them you may, and go you will,

unless you cease from the sins you learned of them—but you go unwelcome. They would turn you back after whom you press on with a heavy and reluctant damnation.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." They enter at once into peace, if not into glory. Devils tempt no more, the wicked trouble no more:

> "Flesh and sin no more control
> The sacred pleasures of the soul."

The days of suffering and sorrow are ended. The body rests in hope, while the soul is happy—happy as the disembodied spirit can be. But complete perfection includes the body. The soul must ever tend to and affect its body. Bliss cannot be, in the full sense, consummated until its restoration, all fit and suitable for an endless union. Hence Job, referring not to death, but to the resurrection, as the context shows, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands." He argues that if a man die he shall live again—not as a separate spirit, but in his entirety. The "I" that waits in hope of the resurrection is the part of man alive after dissolution—the soul longing for the satisfaction to be enjoyed in reunion with the body. A spirit that never had a body, and not constituted for one, may be fully satisfied without; but if framed for and associated in experience with a body, it cannot be complete without one. It is pleased to have its vitality diffused through what more remotely belongs to it and is dear to it. And it is, in a sense, straitened till this be accomplished. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Then, and not before, there will be nothing left to be desired.

No wonder the soul thinks on its lowly companion, well pleased that it rests in hope, and that God, who so curiously formed and adapted it, will have "a desire to the work of his hands."

> "God, my Redeemer, lives,
> And ever, from the skies,
> Looks down and watches all my dust,
> Till he shall bid it rise."

Notwithstanding this possibility of higher bliss, this waiting for the full "adoption—to wit, the redemption of our body"—paradise must be a good place. Abraham is there, and all the faithful.

Goodly company! Angels, as spirits also, are congenial for intercourse. And it is not likely that they which see God's face would be sent down from heaven to convey the souls of the just into that place where are no unveilings of that face. Even in this world, God's grace can be so poured into earthen vessels, his love and mercy so sweetly manifested, as to make the willing sufferer abide in patience for his release. What raptures must there be where the saints of all ages in harmony meet, and they who have loved meet again—detained, if detention it can be called, only in due time to be made happier. Contentment were easy in paradise. Like enough, Peter has long ago said, "It is good to be here; let us make tabernacles."

Children of God, it is within a day's journey. Your faithful friends are not lost, but gone before. Should it please God to dismiss us, "this day" we should be with them, in paradise. There is comfort in the thought of death—light in that valley—sweet hope for our dead, and for ourselves dying. Jesus has gone before. Grace and hope span the tomb. If there is much to stay for, there is more to go to. And the Christian is in a strait betwixt the two. Of those departed, survivors may use touchingly true and solemn words, in the office for the burial of the dead: "Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity, we give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this, our brother, out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching thee that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory." And those who welcome each new comer "into peace" on the other shore, and wait till all are come, for their own perfection, might well say, *Amen*. There is a communion of saints.

St. Paul exults in view of martyrdom: "For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight." The soldier puts off his armor; the victory is won: "I have finished my course"—the race is run, the goal reached; the path of duty lies all behind me. "I have kept the faith"—no fear any more of making shipwreck of it—no danger of becoming a castaway. Probation is ended—I am approved. What

now? Crowned immediately? He says not so, but continues: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." The social principle in religion heightens its individual joys: "And not to me only, but to all that love his appearing." Proclaimed victor, but not crowned. It is certain, however, that he is to have a crown. It is cast, gemmed, and "laid up" for Paul. No man can take that crown. Solomon garnished the "house of the forest of Lebanon" with two hundred targets of beaten gold, and three hundred shields. They were hung about its walls—a magnificent display! What are these, in all their glory, to that array of crowns "laid up" for the people of God, who have fought a good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith!

"Love his appearing." If, when he appears, we shall be like him—if the perfection of soul and body in the resurrection depends on his appearing—then it is natural Paul, and all in his condition, though in paradise, should "love his appearing." When in the body, he saw something "far better;" and now, in the spirit, still a "far better" is the object of his hope—even the reunion of that soul and body in the glorious likeness of his Lord. "Things present and things to come" are ours, even in paradise. No restless anxiety, no impatience; but an affectionate longing for the consummation, a felicitous expectation—"looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God."

What a contrast! The wicked dread his appearing, and tremble at every sign that betokens "the great and dreadful day of the Lord." On their part, "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation:" while those who "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time," would rather cry, "How long?" "Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly." In that day, when the frame of nature falls, and all faces gather blackness, he that believeth shall not make haste. Though the sun become as sack-cloth, and the moon as blood, the stars fall, as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when shaken by a mighty wind, and the heavens depart, as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and every island be moved out of their place, yet will not they fear who "love his appearing."

One day of coronation is set for all. The beloved disciple who, outrunning his companions, was first at the sepulchre, shall be over-

taken by the saint of this day, and both enter heaven at even step. There is an inheritance not yet possessed: a virgin soil, and our feet shall brush off its dew with the foremost. By the side of those heroes of faith who "obtained a good report," and whose conduct you have admired and emulated, you may stand, and with them receive the promise. Peradventure you think of other names less renowned, but dearer to you—old companions of earth, who have labored and prayed and sympathized with you. Friends and families in groups, pastors and congregations, may stand and be perfected together.

A church—a family—God's people are also a militant host:

> "One army of the living God,
> At his command they bow;
> Part of his host have crossed the flood,
> And part are crossing now."

They will not straggle into heaven, like the fragments of a broken and defeated army. Passing over, they halt on the other shore. There the land is bright and fields are sunny, and they wait for us. They pitch their tents on celestial plains. For each arrival there is a welcome and a greeting. And when the last has passed over, and the redeemed host has been gathered, in number numberless,

> "They shout to see their Captain's sign,
> And hear his trumpet sound."

Christ, their life, appears, and they also appear with him, in glory:

> "Now shall their sacred, sleeping dust
> Leap into life; for Jesus comes."

Now is the consummation of bliss. Now they are made perfect. Death is swallowed up in victory.

Together they will march to the holy hill, and have a triumphant entry, after the manner of the King of glory, "the Lord mighty in battle," who obtained it for them.

Lo, a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and crying, with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" And all the angels about the throne respond, "Amen: blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto God forever and ever!"

What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they?

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

O thou Saviour of sinners, surely in that day thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul, and be satisfied.

Now unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father—to Him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. AMEN!

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

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"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Gal. vi, 14.

There is an expression similar to this in the Epistle to the Phillippians. The Apostle, writing to them on the same subject, closes one of his arguments with the declaration, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." We are liable to mistake the sense of the Apostle in the use of these strong expressions, unless we use some care to ascertain his true meaning. We are not to understand him that, abstractly considered, he regarded everything as worthless; by no means. His history and writings show that he placed a proper estimate upon the necessaries and conveniences of life; that he valued highly his friendships; that he prized learning and everything calculated to enhance our happiness here; but when any or all of these were compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, or contrasted with the benefits of the Cross of the Redeemer, they dwindled into insignificance.

In meeting the obligations of this hour, we propose taking up the theme of the Apostle, and shall undertake to present the Cross of Christ, in its power and attractiveness and blessing, as the object above all others which demands the highest place in the affections of every man. In doing so we shall also endeavor to follow the spirit of the text, by contrasting the Cross with the objects connected with and limited to this life, which constitute the chief glory of a large majority of our race.

Though happiness is the end proposed by each, no matter what may be the occupation or profession, or if none at all, yet it is a melancholy truth that the vast majority of mankind are in the road that leads directly from its attainment. Deluded by sin, they are follow-

ing the dictates of their carnal appetites, and as they are cursed and thrown into confusion, it is easy to see that they are unsafe guides, and in the end will prove ruinous to their hopes, for under their influence they form attachments to things which soon perish and pass away. Thus the million bow at the shrine of wealth, glory in gain, thinking it will confer happiness. Money is the great Diana now. Money is the watch-word by which the sentinels are passed to positions of honor, trust, and emolument. If there is ever a time when Mammon holds more undisputed sway than at another, that time is the present. Individuals of every class and grade and profession and sex, almost, are brought under its influence, so as to be swayed by it to a greater or less extent. The ruling sentiment of the age seems to be that money-getting should constitute the chief concern of life. What a strange infatuation! An individual may bend all his energies in the pursuit of wealth, and at last become disappointed in its acquisition. How blank and terribly embarrassing must his condition be, who, after consecrating his time and talent and physical energies at the shrine of Mammon, is despised and rejected by his God! But allow that he is successful, how easily do riches "make themselves wings" and fly away! Grant even that he is not only successful, but retains his wealth, how poor, how wretchedly destitute! aye, we would repeat, if thereby we can make it more emphatic, *how wretchedly destitute* is he who comes down to the grave, at the close of his earthly career, possessed with no other treasure than his world's goods! Out of all his vast possessions he can use only enough to buy a wooden box or metallic case; then, dressed in his best suit of clothes, he is wrapped in a linen sheet and hid from the gaze of his fellows. This little even he cannot carry with him through the grave, for mingling with his dust, when his body is called away by the trump of God, *it* stays behind as fuel in the general conflagration of all things. Wealth is proper enough, sought and obtained and used properly, but should not hold the highest place in the affections of any.

Under the influence of the same appetites, another class glories in *fame*. Catching up the roll, and running over the names of renowned warriors and statesmen and philosophers and poets and orators and scholars, an intense desire prompts them to write theirs on the shining list. The aspirations of many do not rise perhaps so high as this, but the principle is the same in all: *fame* is their God. We have found

some of this class, who did not enjoy more than a neighborhood notoriety, as devout worshippers at its shrine as was ever Wellington or Napoleon. What is *fame?* A bubble that glitters awhile in the sunlight, then bursts and is gone forever! It dies away like the "voices of morning bells on the air." If we would know its worth, let us turn the pages of the past. We read of one Ammon's son, who came forth in the majesty of his strength; the smoke and dust roll into the heavens from the wheels of his triumphal car, as he sweeps the plains of Tyre and Gaza, Phœnicia and Egypt. We are awe-struck and amazed as we see him stopping at the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and, by a mysterious rite of his own invention, lay aside his humanity and assume divinity. On he shoots, like a thunderbolt, through Persia and India, successive victories marking his bloody way, until he stands upon the sea-shore, weeping for more worlds to conquer.

And after all, the pretended god died drunk in Babylon!

We read also of the Carthagenian general, and Roman usurper; the one, after a splendid career, *perishing by his own hand;* the other, in the act of consummating his highest hope, *falling by the hand of the assassin.*

Coming on down to later times, the ear is saluted with "*Vive l' Empereur!*" Not a breath stirs but is loaded with praise to the Corsican lieutenant. His sun scarcely clears the horizon ere it is blazing in its meridian; all Europe is lighted up by the splendor of his genius, and the Anglo-Saxon holds his breath in terror as he sees the thrones of his neighbors, hallowed by the sacred memories of ages, crumbling to dust beneath the giant tread of the man of destiny. Yet, his sun went down as suddenly in cloud and darkness, as it had arisen in brilliancy and hope. *He died in banishment and bonds, an outcast.*

In these examples is seen the worth of fame, when enjoyed in its greatest measure. They have a name renowned, but it is cursed by humanity. They are remembered, and are immortal; so is the plague. Could we call their ghosts from the spirit-land, and take their testimony as to the value of fame, as they should stand before us wrapped in the vestments of the dark world they inhabit, with souls well scorched with unquenchable fires, we venture that testimony would be this: "All the glory of man is as the flower of grass."

Under the same influence another class glories in *pleasure.* What an ephemeral flower is worldly pleasure. Truly it is "but for a season!" When passed it always leaves an "aching void" behind, and

often, even in its enjoyment, the cup of bliss is broken upon our lips, and by a single thought our pleasures die.

These three—wealth, fame, pleasure—constitute, as some one has said, the world's trinity. These are the objects in which worldly-minded men glory. Your observation and experience will witness whether we have correctly represented them; if so, we would have you carry the estimation in which they are now held with you, while we hold up the Cross of Christ, and invite you to look upon it; and we trust that when our reflections are ended, we shall all be prepared to join the Apostle in the prayer of the text.

The first feature in the Cross—of course the doctrines of the Cross are meant; the merit of the victim, and not the instrument itself—which we present, is *its elevating influence upon individuals and nations.*

Man, since the fall, has had a downward tendency. The promptings of his fallen nature, as already intimated, lead him into inconceivable difficulty and trouble. Every step he takes increases the distance between himself and his God, and tends to consummate his humiliation and abasement. The Cross counteracts this influence. It calls to him; tells him of his noble birth; points him to his high destiny; exhorts him to retrace his steps. In a word, it elevates him morally, mentally, socially, and exalts him to a high and holy communion with his God. Turn to a page in your observation, and you see this truth illustrated Do you not remember to have seen a wayward son leaving his father's house, or the bosom of his own family; frequenting the haunts of vice and dissipation; descending step by step until he reached the lowest depths of poverty, shame and disgrace? Just as, in his abandonment and wretchedness, he was chasing from his heart the last lingering symptom of good feeling—cursing away the influence of a pious mother's prayers, which tarried with him when all things else had well nigh departed—you saw some messenger of the Cross take him gently by the arm and whisper in his ear a word of hope and recovery. He told him there was yet a chance for him; bade him rise, in the name of Jesus, and be a man. He started up, resolved to make one last effort to return; he threw his eye, as directed, upon the Cross; his strength increased. At last he reached forth his hand, trembling from debauch, and grasped it, and in a moment he stood erect; soundness was restored to him; a new song was put into his mouth—"even praise unto our God"—

decent clothes were substituted for his tattered garments, and, a devout worshipper, he came to occupy a place in the sanctuary of God, and was introduced again into society, a worthy, respectable citizen. Though all this occurred years ago, yet, as you visit him in his comfortable, happy home, kneel with him at the sacramental table, and lift your voice with his in the song of praise, you now, more confidently than then, expect to meet him in Heaven. This is but one instance of the thousands that are occurring all over Christendom, in which the power of the Cross transforms cruel tyrants into affectionate husbands, rebellious children into obedient sons, drunken sots into intelligent citizens, and fiends almost into pious saints.

The elevating influence which the Cross exerts upon individuals, it also exerts upon communities and nations. When the love of Christ constraineth not a people, corrupt passion becomes their guide in all things. Thus they become involved in the same evil consequences, find the same degradation to which the individual is reduced. The Gospel, from its peculiar self-perpetuating principle, prompts its votaries to undertake in their behalf. Soon we see the missionary tearing himself—for he loves as we do—from the embrace of home and country, embarking upon the "dark blue sea," and under the protection of that God who put it into his heart to go, he sets his foot in safety upon heathen soil. He erects the Cross, flings to the breeze his banner, stained all over with precious blood, then kindly approaches the deluded worshipper, as he is bowed before his dumb idol, tells him of the one true and *living* God, whom alone he is to worship; tells him that all his fellows are his brethren, descended from the same stock, subject to the same ills and sorrows, and heirs of the same promises and hopes; tells him of man's fallen state, assures him of the remedy; bids him look upon the Cross and rise to a higher life. The idolator's heart, touched by the holy spirit that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world," turns to that Cross as the needle to the pole, and quitting his senseless worship, he consecrates himself to the service of the most high God. One after another follows his example. A new and glorious era begins to dawn upon that people, as the "day-spring from on high" throws his light across their spiritual sky. As they begin the work of cultivating true morality and religion, they commence remodelling their laws; they begin in earnest the culture of the arts and sciences. The work of civilization goes on under the appliances of the Gospel, until

in commerce, in science, in laws, the new-born nation takes her position side by side with the enlightened nations of the earth.

One ray, emanating from the Cross, has kissed the black, hideous cheek of Africa, and has thrown a smile over the face of that dark, benighted land. The little republic sitting upon the sea-shore, reflecting its borrowed light, heightens the hope inspired by the Prophet, that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," and that the songs of Zion, with their accompaniments, the ploughman's merry laugh, and the rattle of the steam car, shall resound in the jungle, where now is only heard the yell of the savage, the hiss of the serpent, and the roar of the lion.

If we would witness the most wonderful display of the elevating influence of the Cross, nationally, we have only to turn to our own Republic. What has given us the proud and enviable elevation as a nation which we enjoy? What constitutes us the free and happy people we are? The response comes from millions of happy lips, that it is the inculcation and practice of the great doctrines of Christianity—*justice, equality, and fraternity.* The late distinguished Calhoun, in his "Disquisition on Government," teaches that men are influenced by only two principles in their actions—selfishness and benevolence, or self-interest and the interest they feel in others. That selfishness being much stronger than benevolence, the end of all proper legislation is to check the former and promote the latter. If benevolence was the stronger principle, then it would be necessary to reverse legislation, so as to promote selfishness and check benevolence. That government, therefore, he alleges, which produces by its legislative enactments an equilibrium between these two principles, compelling each of its subjects to act with as much regard for the interests of others as his own, is a perfect government. Now, in following the great statesman to his conclusion, and endeavoring as a nation to carry out the doctrine taught in all our legislation, where do we find ourelves standing? Upon the second great commandment of Christ, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the secret of our success in all our struggles to be free, and to rise to a commanding position as a people. This is the sap to the tree of liberty, which causes it to strike its roots deep into the soil, and throw out its great arms, covered with evidences of health and substantial growth. The doctrines of the Gospel have not only elevated us, but they preserve us in our elevation and progress. The corner-stone of our Republic

rests securely beneath the rage of party strifes and fanaticism, not because it was laid with pomp, or is guarded with bristling bayonets, but because it was laid with prayers and tears upon the Cross of Christ. But recently we have had an exemplification of our true preservative principle. When, a few years ago, that dark cloud gathered in our political atmosphere, flinging its black shadows over the whole land, threatening in its fury, if ungirted, to tear in shreds our flag, and rend in fragments our glorious Union, what was it but the honesty, the Christian integrity of the masses, the pure Gospel temper and spirit of the convocations of the people, North and South, that sounded the knell to demagogues and fanatics? Remove from our nation the influence of the Cross, and there are now exciting causes abroad that would make our rivers run red with blood, and bleach our plains with the bones of our bravest and best citizens.

The truth of the position we have assumed is more strikingly manifest by contrasting our condition with that of unfortunate, downtrodden France. God has blessed France with the elements of a great nation—she has the physical element; she has the intellectual element; she has bravery and courage enough for anything; but she lacks the religious element; she is cursed with infidelity; and on this account her masses are ignorant and enslaved; and as a general thing she has to keep them abroad, murdering her neighbors, to prevent them from butchering each other at home. Let a pure Christianity be given to the French, and they would soon break their chains and put themselves upon the platform upon which we now stand. We should glory therefore in the Cross on account of its elevating influence.

Again: we should glory in the Cross, because *it is the manifestation of a peculiar exercise of power by God in meeting the wants of our spiritual nature.* The apostle calls the crucifixion of Christ "the power of God." It has been truly said—

> "'Twas great to speak the world from nought,
> 'Twas greater to redeem."

It required an exercise of power altogether different, in the one case, from that exerted in the other. In the act of creation, God spread out the heavens as a curtain; he digged out the pit of the sea and filled it with waves; he piled mound upon mound, and rock upon rock, until the mountains pierced the clouds,—but all this was done by

the strength of his voice. "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." When man even stood before him, fashioned from the clay, he simply breathed upon him, and he began to live; but when by his disobedience he sunk down into spiritual death, God could not, without an infraction of his justice, breathe him again to life. Though God could fling from his fingers a blazing sun, and send him shining and sparkling on his path; though he could by the strength of his voice crown the sky with shining worlds, and by a wave of his hand pencil their orbits through space; yet it was not enough that he sit upon his throne and point out the way of redemption. If there was a way, it was necessary that God himself come down and press the path with his own feet. This he did. Christ said, when upon earth, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Coming thus in person, when he had thoroughly explained, taught, and enforced his doctrines, he submitted to be lifted upon the cross. Then it was that he brought into exercise his omnipotence, in bearing "our sins in his own body on the tree." When he cried, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" such was the effort put forth by him, that the influence of the act was felt co-extensive with his very existence. God was touched, and through every avenue and vein and fibre of the universe, the power of the influence of this act went thrilling along; for wherever God was, there the sensation was felt. No wonder the earth reeled and rocked and trembled, and the rocks were split; no wonder the graves heaved forth their dead; no wonder the sun covered his face in darkness. Here we witness an act performed by God which rises in grandeur and sublimity above all the displays of his power. There seems to be a significance in the very outstretching of his hands; with one he holds up the principles of his government—lifts them high above the touch of violence or injury; with the other, though pierced and bleeding it is, he grasps the millions of the human race, and, holding them upon his throbbing heart, cries, "Father, forgive!" And as the blood trickles down his side, we behold the sublimest of all spectacles—"Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ever since that time, God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

There was at the same time a power exerted, the effects of which are not visible to the natural eye—a secret power springing from the Cross which sent itself back to the commencement of time, mysteri-

ously imparting virtue to all the altars of sacrifice which had been fired in hope of "the promise," and also sending itself forward to the latest period; thus stretching itself across the generations of man, from the eternity of the past to the eternity of the future. The apostle calls it "The power of God unto salvation." It is in our atmosphere, it is in our sanctuaries, it is in our closets, it is in our "mouth and heart," and, upon confession of the crucified Saviour, it is developed upon us by the Holy Ghost, in raising our dead souls from the death of sin to a life of "righteousness, peace, and joy."

Finally, we should glory in the Cross, because it is our only hope in the hour of death. Disguise it as we may, there is a mysterious influence, beyond the power of our resistance, bearing us rapidly to another state of being. Our life is but "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Our fathers, where are they? They have fallen asleep upon our bosoms, and we have taken them in the arms of affection, and laid them down in their beds of dust. Soon our children will perform the same kind office for us.

> "Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
> Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
> Another race the following spring supplies,
> They fall successive, and successive rise:
> So generations in their course decay;
> So flourish these, when those are passed away."

When the time of our change shall come, then the Cross is our only hope; for when the shadows rising from the grave are dimming our sight; when the silver cord is being loosed; when the turbid waters are rolling at our feet,—then it breaks

> "The shock blind nature cannot shun,
> And lands thought smoothly on the farther shore."

In that hour, the light of the Cross falling into the tomb, scatters its darkness and opens to the spiritual eye the path of triumph, trod by the rising Saviour; and clinging to his cross, and listening to his encouraging voice, we feel that we have reached the perfection of human nature, in knowing death and not fearing it; for passing his gate, in defiant and triumphant tone we can cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? What a grand thing it is, that when kind friends, and our dearest ones, are unable to administer relief or solace; when the pride and pomp and pageant of earth

sicken, rather than soothe; when the heart fails to propel the life-current, and is becoming still and cold,—what a grand thing it is, that we can cast ourselves upon a great beating heart, whose mighty pulsations, in flowing out to the farthest limits of the universe, sending life and sustaining power to all things, just at that moment throb through our souls, thaw away the death-chill, and warm us into eternal life!

God grant that we may all be prepared, now and ever, to join the apostle in the sentiment of the text; and may the time speedily come on, when every human lip, from a thorough conviction of its worth and excellence, shall repeat, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

E. M. Marvin.

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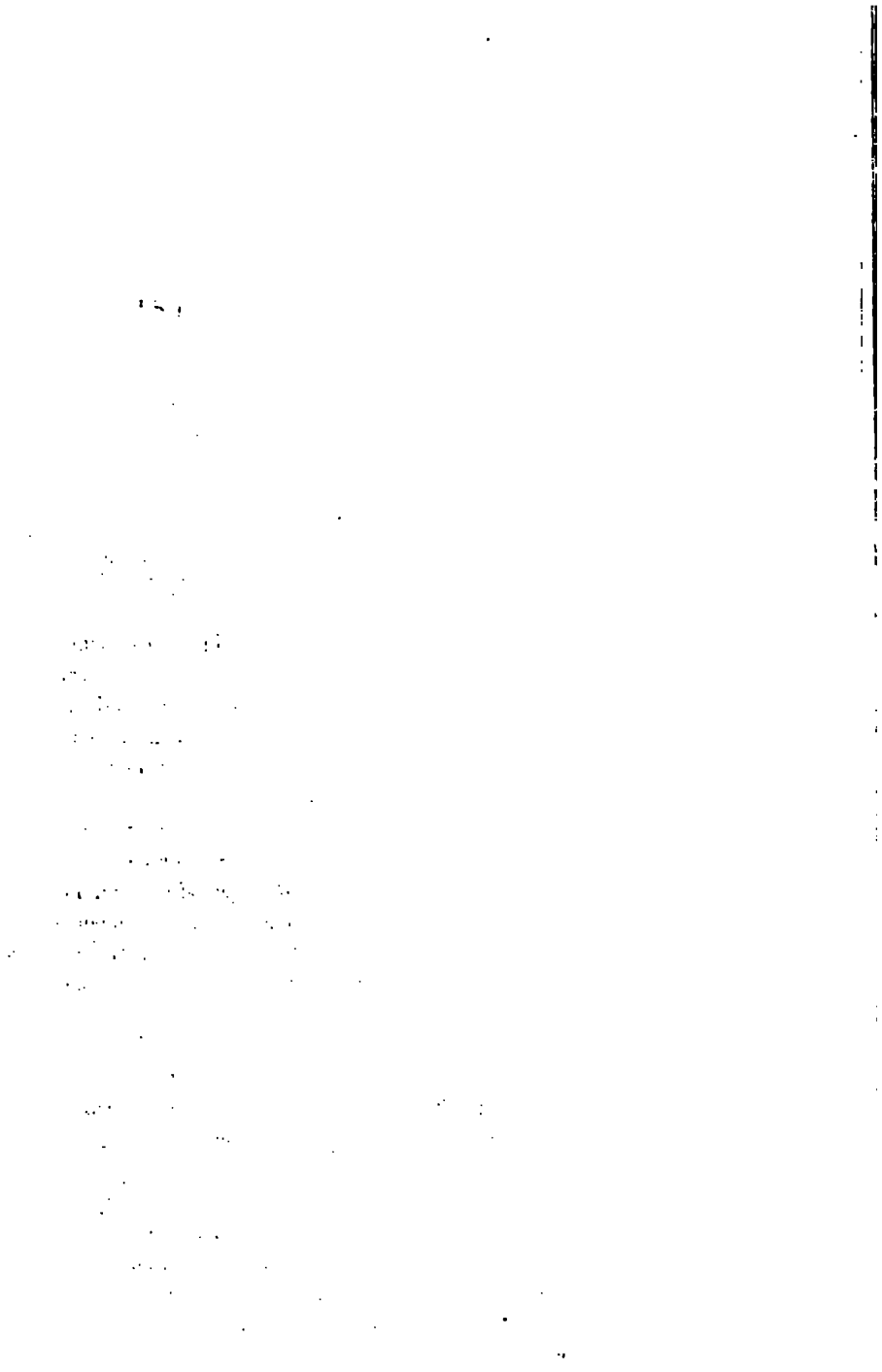

MINISTERIAL SOLICITUDE.

BY REV. E. M. MARVIN,

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"Therefore, said I, Look away from me: I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people: For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains."—Isaiah xxii, 4, 5.

The denunciatory prophecies of Isaiah, and some of the minor prophets, are denominated "burdens"—a most expressive title. The curse of God is heavy—it is intolerable.

Isaiah, commissioned by God himself, stood upon the heights of Judea, and hurled thunderbolts here and there against the most powerful and prosperous nations in existence. Babylon, Moab, Edom, and other nations and cities, were the objects of malediction. The prophet seemed an angel of destruction, as the lightning leaped out of his terrible words, eager for its guilty prey. He stood, the agent and embodiment of vengeance, with features unrelaxed, as he saw empires overthrown by the headlong violence of the wrath which his lips pronounced. Scene after scene of national crime and its sanguinary denouement passes before his vision, and finds expression from his tongue. But he weeps not, shudders not—he simply sees and denounces. The man is lost in the prophet.

At last a *burden* comes that wakes the man. The tension, even of prophetic strength, is insufficient to support the enormous load, and it lies on the prophet's soul. Grief clamors for utterance, and puts tears into the eyes of the seer to make the glaring vision less intolerable. Words of anguish shriek amid the thunders of prophetic vengeance: "Look away; I will weep bitterly: labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people."

It is the "burden of the valley of vision."

We are to understand by the valley of vision, *Judea*, or, as some

suppose, *Jerusalem*. The subject of the prophecy is the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, and perhaps its conquest by Nebuchadnezzar. The latter is probably referred to in the first part of the prophecy. Both these invasions, and especially the latter, brought heavy calamity upon the Jews. The bloodshed, the starvation, the violation of Judean homes, the brutal bearing of the savage soldiery, the consternation of Hebrew women delicately raised, the defilement of the temple, the desecration of the altar, the long procession of weeping captives, torn from their own vine and fig-tree, and hurried away into the land of the idolator, presented to the Jewish seer a panorama the most appalling his eyes had ever looked upon. It was his fatherland, and he was none the less a patriot for being a prophet. On the contrary, his prophetic character gave him an intense Jewish heart. In Judea, religion was an element of patriotism. To all the other considerations that endear a country to its citizens, there were added here the promises and strange providence of God which had brought the seed of Abraham into the land flowing with milk and honey; the memories of a thousand divine interpositions on behalf of their oppressed and endangered country; the solemnities of their faith, that brought them near to God; their national election, by God himself, to be his peculiar treasure, and the consciousness of a faith and worship infinitely purer and sublimer than those of the nations surrounding them. Thus the full strength of their religious character entered into their patriotic sentiments. The land was consecrated, in their eyes, by every sacred consideration that could fix affection or excite emotion. Around Jerusalem, especially, the place where Jehovah was worshipped, these sentiments clustered. There the smoke of continual incense and sacrifice went up to the God of their fathers; and there, from between the cherubim, did He "shine forth" and answer their supplications.

In an eminent religious character, such as Isaiah, these sentiments would be doubly strong. Every stone in the mountains that were round about Jerusalem would be dear to him; every vessel in the temple would be sacred. The utmost strength of his emotional nature would take hold of the city of God, and the tread of idolatrous feet upon its pavements would grind his heart. He would "love Jerusalem above his chief joy," and to witness *her* desolation would be the consummation of his own.

Armies might come and go, depopulate cities and ravage empires,

and leave the smoke of ruined homes behind them over half a continent, so they kept within the territories of the stranger. But horrid war! Must it stain the sacred hills of the "promised land?" Must it ravage the "heritage of God?" The man of God could not bear it. "Look away from me: I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me."

The anguish of the prophet is the example of every true minister of God to men. He deals not with men so remote and uncongenial to him as to arouse no interest. There is no man so much a heathen or barbarian as to be beyond his sympathy. The acutest sensibilities of his nature unite him to the cross, and the cross connects him with the whole world. His citizenship is in the kingdom of Christ, and that embraces in its provisions mankind entire.

The true minister of Christ feels himself charged, in a measure, with the destiny of those who come within the range of his ministrations. He feels the deepest concern for them. He cannot bear that they should reject his message, which comes to them from God. We will consider this subject of ministerial solicitude in several aspects.

I. It arises—

1. From a clear view of the nature of sin. He realizes the enormous *sinfulness of sin*. He sees how hateful it must be to God, how it vitiates the nature it inhabits, how it debases the soul, and fixes an infamous brand upon the being that is controlled by it. This is the essence and source of every species of evil. It is the poison injected by the serpent into the veins of our race at the very fountain of humanity, and it has been spreading ever since. Wherever it comes it brings a blight. It has taken possession of states, and places them alternately under cruel tyranny and still more cruel licentiousness. It has made itself master of commerce, and trade has become almost another word for fraud. It controls social life, and has made intercourse between neighbors a lie. It enthrones itself in the family circle, and either destroys all peace, or makes the family bond a mere species of hearthstone selfishness. It extends its domination over the individual heart, and fills it with all uncleanness. The world is permeated by it and suffused with it, and "all the foundations are out of course." Not only the murder, and theft, and slander, and blasphemy, that dare heaven with demoniacal effrontery, but the more craven, though not less impious brood of

covert corruptions, blacken the character of man, so that not one escapes. They disturb human relations, so that everything is out of joint.

But, to the mind that appreciates divine truth, the worst aspect under which sin appears is in the fact that it alienates man from his Creator. Our relations to Him are infinitely the most sacred of any that we sustain. To disregard them is at once the climax of guilt and the consummation of moral ruin. Everything that is noble in human nature is realized in communion with God. Everything that is desirable in human condition comes of harmonious relations with Him. The recklessness of moral obligation that can disregard divine claims is the concentration of crime. This first of claims despised, it matters little, so far as the character of the sinner is concerned, what becomes of the rest.

One of the most alarming manifestations of depravity is the fact that men are so stupid in their moral perceptions that they cannot see this fact. They imagine that the whole sphere of goodness is filled when they discharge their obligations to one another. As though there were no God, or that we owed him nothing. Disregard of God is the very essence of sin, and they imagine they escape by avoiding merely some of its accidents. It is this bluntness of feeling that makes men so immovable in their sins—that seems, in some cases, almost to shut them up to their doom.

The only thing that is hateful to God is sin. The only misfortune of sinners is to fall under his hatred. The faithful servant of God is grieved in his soul that God should be flouted by His creature, and that men should fall under *His* displeasure.

2. The concern of the minister arises from a just conception of the danger of souls. As sin, in its own nature, is no trifle, so it cannot be regarded as such in the divine administration. The hateful and ruinous thing must be put under ban. The most effectual check must be laid upon its progress. God owes it at once to Himself and His creatures to punish the workers of iniquity. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

This fearful issue of a sinful life follows at once from the nature of sin and the divine displeasure against the sinner. Sin, in its effect upon the soul, renders it incapable of communion with the fountain of good. All essential good comes from God. But the sinful nature is abhorrent to Him, and there is and can be no inter-

course. This privation must result in unhappiness. But sin does still more—it deranges and perverts the nature it possesses. The soul, in its normal condition, is adjusted to enjoyment. The affections, which constitute the emotional nature, are genial and joyful. But sin jostles them out of their adjustment, and turns them to gall. In their sad perversion, they answer ends exactly the reverse of those designed in their production.

The faculty of repugnance, in its healthful state, directed temperately but decidedly against evil, was given for the soul's protection and safety. But sin inflames it into anger, hatred, revenge: and these tear the soul with cruel pangs. Love, a pure spiritual affinity, is the harmonizing and happifying principle of the intelligent universe. It is the magnetic touch that turns gravitation Godward everywhere. But sin has reached even this, and, from its delightful and undeviating polarity, turned it to wild and demoniac impulses, always earthward and debasing, and involving a guilty consciousness and a disappointed hope. Conscience, intended to be not only the tiler of the soul, to guard it against all contraband approach, but also a mirror reflecting the smile of God upon the innocent spirit, brightening its peacefulness into rapture, becomes a Nemesis, armed with a thousand lashes. Consciousness occupies the present with guilty pain. Memory gathers evil from the past, and the imagination sweeps the illimitable future for yet more horrid forms of anguish; and these two, meeting, from the past and future, at the present, with their dreadful hoard, deluge consciousness with woe.

This desolate picture is not realized in this life, simply because every sinner exists under the mitigations which grace secures him. This restraining influence removed, and his soul becomes, in its own being, a lake of fire and brimstone. Sin, left to itself, is hell.

It is impossible to conceive of any additional element that could add a shade to this midnight, except one—the wrath of God. This consummates the soul's ruin.

How the blackness blackens still under the pencil of avenging inspiration! "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is revealed "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." We read of the "fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Our Maker declares that after the

persistent rejection of His mercies by rebellious men, "He will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh."

The divine displeasure finds its expression in the eternal condition of the sinner. He is "cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" "Outer darkness!" The very words make a man shudder. And Oh! "the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone!" To be alive forever, in raging fire and the stifling smoke of brimstone! If anything can be more dreadful, it is "the worm that dieth not!"—a revolting reptile feeding forever on a living soul!

Feel! The minister that does not feel is a monster. If he be a man, he will join the cry of the prophet, "Labor not to comfort me." I will hear no consolation. The children of my people are given to the slaughter.

8. The fact of immortality adds infinitely to the interest with which the sinner's condition is to be regarded. Any condition that will terminate is tolerable. But souls are immortal; and character and destiny, once beyond the boundary of probation, are unalterable. In the eternal world every lineament of the moral features becomes fixed. No agencies are at work there to produce a beneficent change. Guilt and degradation are the soul's heritage for eternity. Oh! eternity, how will thy cycles lag in their course over the despairing eyes fixed on the dial that marks their progress! The depths of the future lengthen as they are approached. Death is sought in vain. The soul that might have had heaven for the asking once, now *begs* for annihilation, and even this poor boon is denied it. *To be* and *to suffer* are inevitable now. Existence itself becomes hateful, and life a curse! To battle with a disgusting self, and not be able to destroy it, to flee and not be able to escape it, forever and forever—this is the doom of the guilty. Oh! thou just God, what has sin wrought!

4. A lively sympathy with the sufferings and work of Christ characterizes the faithful minister. He is so fully in communion with the Saviour that he seems almost a partaker of the "agony," in his minute degree.

The Victim of the cross draws all noble natures to himself. IMMANUEL—*God* WITH *us*—must ever be "chiefest among ten thousand" to all right-feeling human hearts. Godhead allies itself to our nature, and binds itself by a kindred link to our Spirits, "*God* was manifest in the flesh," and is henceforth our Elder Brother.

The object of his advent heightens the interest. "He came to seek and to save the lost," and we ourselves were the lost objects of his self-denying beneficence. Ruined natures are restored, spiritual enmity reclaimed to friendship, and upon death itself is breathed the breath of a new, divine vitality. Creation is outdone, and the display of Godhead appears. Above all, the manner of the achievement invests it with transcendent glory. It was the only undertaking in which Godhead ever *labored*. In creation, the divine *words* shaped themselves into worlds, and the divine *volition* wheeled them into their orbits. But, to reclaim rebellious spirits, he must needs put on the working dress of humanity, and toil, and die! Let the history of redemption infuse its spirit into a man, and see how his soul will yearn for the salvation of the "blood-bought!"

5. All holy beings rejoice over the salvation of a soul. The repentance of a single sinner is an event of sufficient magnitude to be telegraphed at once to heaven, and published there to heighten angelic joy. "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth." Angel shouts to angel, till the remotest hears it: "The dead lives!" "The lost is found!" and every harp gives out a gush of unstudied rapture. God himself rejoices.

This interest of superior natures in us exalts our idea of the soul's importance. It can be no trivial thing that concentrates the attention of princely intelligences. It can be an event of no small magnitude that produces revelry amid their thrones. The mystery of redemption is the object of profound inquiry among the angels; "they desire to look into these things"—and they do actually exult in the triumphs of the Cross.

It is no tax upon the imagination to suppose that Christ rejoices in the happy issue of his labor. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Gethsemane and the Cross, contemplated by him in the light of their results, shall produce profound complacency in his mind. Every saved soul will recall that awful night and day, but in the recollection he shall be "*satisfied*."

6. The preacher is God's ambassador, and is directly responsible to him for souls "committed to his charge." For them he must "*give account*."

A commission of any sort from that high authority must produce a spirit of trembling anxiety in the bearer of it. How much alive

will he be to the displeasure that must follow upon any want of fidelity. This alone, aside from the interests with which he is charged, is enough to arouse him to the keenest solicitude. But, then, he is to enter upon negotiations directly involving the eternal destiny of souls, and the vital interests of the divine government.

I cannot imagine a consideration that might add to the force of those actually concentrated on the preacher's heart, to give pungency and power to the feelings that must sway him in the performance of the duties of his office.

To realize all this so as to produce a great concern for souls, there is requisite,

1st. A full, clear faith. Without this a man cannot appreciate the nature of divine claims or spiritual facts. The realities with which we have chiefly to do are unappreciated by any other means than faith. They belong to a sphere which no perception through the means of a physical organism can recognise. The soul must be raised above the conditions of its physical habitation to have a real, sensible appreciation of divine things.

An account of these things God has given us in his word. To the mind in its native, carnal condition, they seem distant and unreal. To such the only *real* is the *tangible*. They are so fully occupied with the gross every-day facts that crowd upon sensation, that, becoming assimilated to their nature, there is no aptness of spiritual perception and existence. Even where there is sufficient elevation of the reason to recognise the truth of religion, there is so much earthliness in the affections that it produces no deep impression, so that men live in the habitual acknowledgment of the claims of Christianity, and equally habitual inattention to them. There can be no more astounding inconsistency than this. It is monstrous! But the reason of it is that though there be an intellectual belief there is no *realizing faith*. And there never can be until the grace of God shines into the heart and renders it susceptible of a divine consciousness. Then, and not till then, spiritual things become actualities. Then they begin to take effect upon the sensibilities. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It takes hold of the remote and the spiritual with a consciousness as vivid as that produced by sensation. Eternal things now begin to impress the soul in a manner corresponding to their importance.

With such a faith as this, a faith which transports the spirit into the presence of infinite realities, a faith that *sees sin and hell*, that sees *God and eternity*, the minister receives his message from God to the sinner. *Everything* hangs on the reception or rejection of the message. Everything is poised on the volition of the sinner, and that is either oscillating, or has settled on the wrong side. Considerations that fill eternity compress themselves into a single hour, and waken in the heart that has faith, an agony that may find some faint expression in countenance and voice, but none in words. It is too intense for language.

2d. There must be an elevated Christian experience. Indeed, faith, *true* faith, will secure this. The two are inseparable. He that walks by faith walks with God. His moral nature is open to holy influences, and becomes imbued with the spirit of religion.

Experimental religion is very readily defined. One word expresses it all. That word is LOVE. "The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us," is the new birth. This is experimental religion. The man who enjoys it in its perfection loves God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. All the pure and noble sensibilities of the soul become active. Sin becomes hateful, and virtue lovely. The one his soul abhors; with equal fervor he rejoices in the other.

Under the active operation of this principle, the person of the sinner becomes dear to him. He looks upon one for whom Christ died; one who with the acutest sensibilities, equally alive to suffering and enjoyment, is immortal; one who is his fellow, having the same originally noble, though fallen nature, and grappling with the same enemies. He looks upon each man with a feeling of deep personal interest—with the heart of a brother, arbiter of his own destiny, poised between contending motives, and uncertain of the issue.

Thus his religious character gives every man a place in his heart, and awakens alarm for every one he sees in danger. It wrings from him the agonized cry, "My brother! my brother! thou art staggering on the edge of the precipice, and the lake of unquenchable fire is at the bottom." He would interpose his own person, if he could, to arrest the fall.

II. The nature and extent of this solicitude. The nature of it is found in the general principles of our faith; its extent is regulated

very much by personal characteristics and circumstances, and is frequently fluctuating.

1. The nature of ministerial solicitude is indicated in what has been already said. It is the alarm of a pure nature alive to eternal things, for those who are exposed to infinite retribution. It is the feeling of responsibility in the execution of a commission from Jehovah to deathless spirits. He is the watchman on the walls, and if he allows the sword to come without warning, the blood of slain souls is upon him. It is at the same time the vibration of the Saviour's sorrow in his soul—the echo of the Saviour's death-groan in his heart. All the moving considerations connected with redemption conspire to create it. The urgencies of immortal want clamor in his ear. The breathing of earnest angel-ministries to the same great object deepens the intenseness of his anxiety. Divine expostulations of most subduing pathos are put into his mouth to raise him to the inexpressible height of their meaning.

2. Sensitive natures become agitated under it, as Habakkuk; or melancholy, as Jeremiah; or impetuous, as Nahum. The profound spirit of Paul swells to an ocean wave of feeling—a *tide* of earnestness. The great soul of Isaiah bows itself; he weeps bitterly, and will hear no comforter. Whatever there is earnest in a man will be roused to its fullest measure. The preacher's calling becomes the master excitant of his nature, and concentrates it upon the one great object before him. Under its influence the strong man becomes a Hercules, and even the languid become strong.

There are times, however, when special causes produce an augmentation of the feeling, as times of revival. Not unfrequently does solicitude deepen into anguish, and the excitement become so great that any long duration of it would be fatal. It produces a tension which neither body nor spirit can bear.

But at all times the soul of the minister yearns for the salvation of men, and is at any moment alive to the peril of those who come to his attention in their sins and exposed to the death that dies not. He is on the alert for souls.

3. Solicitude for souls is graduated, however, by the higher or lower standard of personal piety in the subject of it. No doubt the preacher of the Gospel, himself, may live so far from God, and cultivate his faith so negligently that his religious consciousness will be very feeble. Many deplorable instances of this are given in the

history of the Church. Entire continents and long ages have been marked by it as their leading religious characteristic. And in her best estate the Church laments the presence of more or less of this class of men at her altars. Not Sinai can alarm them nor Calvary melt them. There they stand, amid solemnities that hold angels breathless, themselves unmoved.

In one whom religion has taken possession of, and who is moved by the Holy Ghost to call sinners to repentance, there is the highest exhibition of unselfish interest in the welfare of others. He lives for them, labors for them, suffers for them. He is so fully occupied for *them*, that self is to a very great degree lost sight of and abandoned. Fatigue, and suffering, and shame, can scarcely recall him to the demands of his own existence. When Moses stood before Jehovah, and heard him threaten the entire extinction of the rebellious race—No! he exclaimed in passionate intercession, NO! rather "blot me out of thy book!" Paul, in contemplating the case of the reprobate Jews, makes this earnest declaration: "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." His "spirit was stirred within him" when he saw a "city wholly given to idolatry;" and when he had turned men to God they were his "glory and crown of rejoicing." When he had collected them into a church he was "jealous over them with godly jealousy," for he "*feared* lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," and the fruit of his labor be lost.

4. Mingled with this is a pervading feeling of unworthiness—"I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips." How is it that God should choose *such* an instrument for his holy purposes? "Who am I, and what is my father's house?" Can *I* be *God's Ambassador* to negotiate in his name with the revolted subjects of his government? Impossible! I am a sinner saved by grace myself, and demanding fresh supplies of grace every moment.

When once the fact is admitted, and the divine call recognised, still he says and feels "the heavenly treasure is in a clay vessel," and, bowing with conscious weakness under the burden, he turns continually to the promise, "Lo! I am with you always."

5. "Wo is me if I preach not the Gospel." I must preach or die. This direct accountability to God under an undoubted conviction of duty gives pungency to his concern. He is solicitous for himself as well as others. Fidelity in the discharge of his duty to them is the pivot on which his own safety vibrates. When our flaming firmament shall light the judgment scene, he expects to hear the Judge demand "Where is thy brother?" That will be no time for the impudent infidel reply, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Who of us in that hour will be able to stand with undisturbed composure, and respond, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me."

Let us consider, finally,

III. Its results upon ministerial effort and success.

1. It incites to activity. It tolerates no sluggishness. It is a constant impulsion, urging its subject to the most strenuous exertion in the service of souls. He looks around him for a place to work and a way to work, "if by any means he may save some." He is not select as to places, nor ambitious of distinctions, but *work* he must. Let others scheme and wrangle for promotion—"let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth"—he has loftier demands to meet. To preach the Gospel—to all—especially to the poor—is his highest aspiration.

To occupy metropolitan churches, and to see his name in newspapers and books, with flattering encomiums, is a very little thing. In highways and hedges, in forgotten lanes and alleys, in rude, uncultivated neighborhoods, he finds the fields whitening to the harvest. A soul saved out of a gutter is as good as a soul saved out of a palace.

He can even afford to live on a small salary. "Not yours, but you," is his motto. He can dispense with sumptuous dinners and costly clothing. Only let him work for Christ and souls. What if he does not attract the world's eye. God sees him! He is willing to be

> "—— little and unknown,
> Loved and prized by God alone."

If the force of his talents or the accidents of his position elevate him to public regard, he accepts it, not as the end of his labors, but as furnishing the means, and indicating the methods of exertion.

A model preacher was the man of Tarsus. In all he did this prin

ciple predominated—"the love of Christ constraineth us." From the moment "Christ was formed within him, the hope of glory," the *spirit of the ministry* wrought in him, making him a constant miracle of endurance and of toil. No distance was too great to traverse in pursuit of souls. No difficulty was too formidable to encounter. No danger too extreme to be braved. Throughout Asia and Europe, through perils, stripes and imprisonments, publicly and from house to house, night and day, to the very last, he gave himself to the work. Wesley found Paul's mantle and put it on. From the great Apostle he took the motto which became the main-spring of his over-active life, "in labors more abundant." Anywhere, in London or in the collieries, no matter where, so there were men there. These two men—Paul and Wesley—each in his day, literally stirred the world up. It is not the fortune of every man to do so large a work, but every one may work as incessantly as they in the minuter cultivation of a smaller field. There is work enough for the most vigorous body and the most active mind, in a single pastoral charge. To prepare for thorough pulpit instruction, to visit the sick and them that are out of the way, to learn the wants of all and supply them, will leave a man but little rest.

2. He can do nothing else. His consuming zeal will hear of no meaner employment. This is his business, and it is of too much importance to be encroached upon by other avocations. Head, and heart, and hands must be devoted to this. He must not bring to it affections diluted by the cares of secular life. Of the Gospel he must live.

3. It infuses an inspiring animation into all his ministrations. His theology is no mere speculation. His gospel is not a system of remote and unappreciated facts. Gesture, and tone, and eye are alive with the message. The words take more than half their meaning from the utterance of a burning spirit. A sentence which from other lips means little, comes from his throbbing with vital thought. Nor is it from studied action. It is the soul, heated to fusion, and pouring itself out in the warnings and persuasions of the Gospel.

4. Such a ministry is always successful. The elements of success are all present. Earnest workers always reach their object. The energy of a sincere mind is a wonderful power. Faith at the same time allies itself to divine strength. In the enthusiasm of his own

spirit he is a host, and with the momentum of divine energy added, he is irresistible.

Contemplate the results: Souls delivered out of the snare of the devil, washed from their dark defilement, relieved of their guilt, and saved from the damnation of hell. Hundreds rejoice in the ministry of a single man. They turn their eyes upward. The clouds are parted. The sky is luminous. Heaven opens. Thrones, and crowns, and joys invite them. Walls and arches, palaces and domes, brilliant with precious stones, and aglow with the glory of God, welcome them. Joy, kindled to rapture, brightens every face, and pours itself in divinest melody from myriad strings.

We must live in heaven before we can fully realize the spirit of this theme. If we could use the words in which the seraphim hold their high communion, we should find no audience to receive the celestial import. We must die to understand it.

Let the day come. Let me see the dust of toil brushed off, and the "fine linen, clean and white, put on." Let me see the clay chrysalis burst into the seraph. Let me hear the shout that shall go up into the ear of God, when the "great multitude, which no man can number," shall "enter in through the gates into the city:"

"Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." AMEN.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John v, 39.

If there be often much difficulty in saying enough, and no more, on *any one verse* or single passage of Scripture, how much more is that difficulty increased when we undertake to say all that might be desired on the *Book itself*, which contains near fifty thousand verses. The mind is, in a measure, bewildered in the attempt rightly to *embody*, and thereby forcibly to exhibit the vast, varied, and almost endless *materiel* of such a subject; and especially so, when it is required to develop all that is important to be introduced in the brief space usually allotted to the services of the pulpit. Indeed, on a theme like this, it is no easy task judiciously to select, from the innumerable points of interest and of argument, all the proper elements wherewith to construct the *frame-work* of a discourse which may prove at once pertinent and impressive, profitable and edifying, to an intelligent worshipping assembly.

It may be said, that the subject is *old, trite, common*. True, but not yet exhausted, nor ever will be. A man may live in a house without being an architect; so may we perpetually talk or write about the Bible without understanding to the full extent any one of the wonders of its construction, the secret sources of its power and beauty. Though for centuries past the most gifted intellects have been engaged in this worthiest subject of study and investigation, still the true value of this blessed volume remains untold. Yes: this book, with which the careless infant plays, in which bright childhood cons its task, and the dim eye of age meets a cheering light; this book, by which the learned become more wise, and withered hearts find hope; this book, whose glorious "author, God himself—the subject, God and man—the end, salvation and eternal life," fully to comprehend and appreciate, in all its breadth, and length,

and depth, and height, has never been vouchsafed to any human, or (as hinted, 1st Peter i, 12,) even angelic mind. And yet every serious, earnest inquirer, however humble, may contribute something, if but a mite, to the common treasury of thought, and thus, to some extent, help forward the grand approximation towards the truth, which is constantly going on while the ages roll away. The bare thought that the best and brightest of mankind, the highest educated of every age and realm, the appointed leaders of mind, the kingly spirits of earth, have here labored and toiled to faintness and weariness, is enough to inspire fear and much trembling while I, in weakness, the mighty task essay, to speak of a book which "has stood, time's treasure, and the wonder of the wise." Aye, too, a book which reveals its secrets, imparts its power, and bestows its blessings only on those who, with a reverent, loving, humble, believing heart, receive it as the pure Word of God, the exact transcript of infinite perfection, and especially that which brings to view the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, by whom alone we have eternal life, and of whom mainly to testify, this sure and blessed Word was given.

Impressed with this great truth, and at the same time deeply conscious of the immense difficulty of condensing and shaping our thoughts on a theme so grand, so profound, so immeasurable, well may the preacher feel himself as much perplexed as was the man who, when he first discovered that the rays of light which fell on the convex surface of his sun-glass had been gathered to a burning focal point, inquired "if a lens could not be made that might gather all the sun's rays?"

The rays of light, my brethren, emanating from this holy book, to enlighten, cheer, and vivify the world, are more numerous, if possible, than those which come from yonder sun, rejoicing in his beams; and should I presume to gather them all into one, a hundred, or a thousand sermons, I would act as wildly in the attempt as the man in the case of the sun-glass. Let us then content ourselves, at least on the present occasion, with such leading facts, principles, and truths, as stand in some wise connected with the text; and that we may observe some form or method, the better to impress the mind, and thereby aid your recollection, we will begin with that part of our subject, and so continue and end as general order and just propriety may seem to us most naturally and plainly to demand.

Let us then consider:

I. THE TERM "SCRIPTURES."

Scripture, in its original sense, is of the same import with *writing*, and as such signifies "anything written." By way of eminence, however, and as used in the plural, the term denotes the entire volume of divine revelation, containing, as it does, the most important of all writings. In the place before us, the Saviour refers to the writings of the Old Testament, as those of the New were not then, or during any period of his abode on earth, (at least, in an embodied form,) in existence; and it was only by reference to these, (if not indeed direct quotation therefrom,) that he could have in any way vindicated his conduct, and convinced the Jews that the Father had sent him, since these alone were by them received and accredited as divine, and in which alone they thought they had eternal life. On no other ground could he have so forcibly upbraided them, when he said, "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures;" and again, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Yet, according to St. Peter, (2d Epistle, 3d chapter, 16th verse,) the writings of the evangelists and apostles, together with those of the Old Testament, are all included, and thus constitute one volume or collection of sacred writings. And as the Saviour *now* speaks to us, not only by what Moses and the prophets, but by what he himself declared, as recorded by the evangelists, and also by what his apostles wrote, as moved by the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, we must of course embrace in the term "Scriptures," as expressed in the text, all the canonical books, both of the Old and New Testaments: since together they must either stand or fall, the one being incomplete without the other—and can only, when conjoined, form a full, sufficient, and perfect revelation of the will of God to man; for like the overshadowing cherubim, they look to the same propitiatory, and, as the lips of an oracle, give utterance to the same blessed truths. Whatever, therefore, may be said on this point, in this discourse, must be understood of all the Scriptures, which, though called by different names, mean but one thing—the Word of God, given by his authority, and under his direction; written, not left to uncertain oral tradition, but in the shape of an indestructible stereotype—an immutable fixture—proof alike against the attacks of open foes and the

corruptions of pretended friends. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, write"—thus and so. "It is written" "To the law and to the testimony"—the final appeal, the perfect standard. "Indeed, Jesus so honored his written word that he preferred to quote from its pages solutions of intricate questions, to emitting replies from the depths of his own infinite mind;" and yet this written word is to be spoken, enunciated, preached.*

The Scriptures are sometimes called "oracles," because they are the answers which God has given, from his holy place, to the inquiries of his people. And again, with some enlargement, they are denominated "lively oracles," in contradistinction to old, dead histories, myths, and fables about persons and things long since passed away—if indeed they (all of them) ever existed—and which, even if true, could never have been of any practical use or spiritual benefit to the world.

The apostle Paul mentions it as a chief advantage to the Jewish people that "unto them were committed the oracles of God." And "what nation," says Moses, "is there that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all these laws?" How different these judgments, statutes, oracles, from those idle, ambiguous, equivocal, illusory responses of juggling, lying priests, palming their impious devices upon the credulity of the wretched votaries of some imaginary god or demon. Indeed, how widely different such revelations from those so beautifully and forcibly set forth in the nineteenth and one hundred and twenty-ninth psalms. And if such (as therein expressed) was the esteem and veneration which the pious entertained for the living oracles under the former dispensation, when they had only Moses and the prophets, how then ought they to be prized by us, who have also Christ and his apostles!

The word "holy" is often connected with other titles, to express the pure quality and sublime tendency of the Scriptures. Also, the word "testament" is of frequent occurrence in the sacred writings, and which, in its original import, is equivalent to "covenant"—perhaps a more appropriate term. Either, however, conveys the idea of an instrument—the most solemn and authentic ever presented to the world—subscribed, witnessed, and published in such a manner as stamps in undeniable characters, on the minds of all who view it

* Rom. x, 14, 19; Matt. iv. 17: x, 27; 1st Cor. i, 23: xv, 11; 2d Tim. iv, 2; Mark vi, 12· xvi, 20; Ps. xl, 9; Acts ix, 20: xiii, 38; Col. i, 23; Eph. ii, 17; &c

aright, the name, and being, and perfections of Him "who, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God," and who, as Moses dedicated the first testament by the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you," so also the apostle and high priest of our profession, by his own blood having entered into heaven itself, in the presence of God for us, gives the promise of eternal inheritance, saying "This is the new testament, in my blood, whereof the Holy Ghost is witness, through mighty signs and wonders and miracles;" and not less so through the mystery of grace, "made manifest to all saints by faith and sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

The name "Bible" is more frequently applied than any other. THE BOOK, by way of superlative distinction, because it far excels all others—the book of books, which stands up as the kingly sheaf amid thousands round about that make obeisance unto it—and yet not casting a slight upon, but lending to them, some of its own dignity and honor. In a word, the most perfect instrument and adequate organ of all the gifts and powers by which man, individual or collective, is privileged "to rise above, and lose his dividual, phantom self, in order to find his true self in that distinctness where no division can be, even in the great I AM, the everlasting Word." More than this we cannot say, since, after the widest range, we shall only return to this at last. To know that it is the word of God, has sufficed for thousands and tens of thousands, and it suffices for us. The most earnest and devout search, with the most exact balancing, will determine in favor of this name, as it conveys, most clearly and distinctly, the idea of the *will* of God, so necessary to be known for our salvation; also the *wisdom* of God, so far above the wisdom of the world, (1st Cor. ii, 7); again, word *recorded* by the Holy Ghost, (2d Tim. iii, 16,) —word *inspired* by the most wise, excellent, and holy men, presenting doctrines, precepts, principles and truths, the most pure, perfect and immutable, and which alone embraces all things necessary for faith and practice, and is the best testimony of its own fullness and sufficiency; and that because it is the word of God, and we have no other, and need no other, since it affords certainty in those things which are sufficient to perfect men here thoroughly, furnishing them "unto all good works," and thereby in the end, through faith in

Christ, lead them to life eternal. Therefore, saith Christ himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCRIPTURES:

We are accustomed to look upon the Bible as one book. In a very important and qualified sense, this is true. Its origin, as divine, is one; its doctrines, as a rule of life, one; and the object at which it aims is one. At the same time, it consists of "a great number or small tracts—about sixty-six—the composition of above thirty individuals—persons of all classes, from kings to peasants, of various education, of every kind and measure of intellectual ability, and who lived scattered over a period of nearly sixteen hundred years;" and these tracts composed in different languages, and on divers subjects. The books contained in the Old Testament (with very few exceptions) were collected into one volume by Ezra, "the son of Seraiah, a priest and ready scribe in the law of the God of heaven," whose memory is tenderly cherished by the Jews, and for whom they have an extraordinary esteem, and indeed regard as second only to Moses; and, as such, say "that, if the law had not been given by Moses, Ezra deserved to have been the legislator of the Hebrews." This great restorer and publisher of the Old Testament Scriptures prepared his heart to seek and to do the WORK of collecting and disposing in their proper order, as well as of changing here and there obsolete words and places, and of making such additions (for instance, the last chapter of Deuteronomy) as were deemed necessary, and in all of which, doubtless, he was assisted by the same spirit by which these several books were first written; for we read, "And then Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand," &c. Again, "I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me." And yet again, "According to the good hand of his God upon him, Ezra, the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the word, of the commandments of the Lord, and of the statutes of Israel," &c. (Ezra, chapter vii.)

This work was undertaken and completed during the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, soon after the Babylonish captivity—about five hundred years before Christ. And yet this Jewish canon of Scripture, by Ezra, was not so executed or settled, but that several variations have been made in it. It is probable

that the two books of Chronicles, Nehemiah and Esther—at least portions of them—together with the entire prophecy of Malachi, were adopted into the Jewish Scriptures by Simon the Just, the last of the men of the great synagogue, as in these books certain names and events are recorded, which certainly had no existence till more than one hundred years after the death of Ezra, and of course could not have been put by him in the Old Testament, but by some other, and, as is generally supposed, by Simon the Just, as before stated. It is enough, however, for us to know, that the books as now contained in the Old Hebrew Testament, and only these, were regarded by the ancient Jews as of divine authority; and according to the concurrent voice of all antiquity, are the accredited sacred writings of their nation.

In respect to the Now Testament, we have the most satisfactory testimony that the different writings of which it is composed, (at least the principal part of them, if not indeed all,) were collected into one volume before the death of the Apostle John. The books of the Old Testament were mostly written in Hebrew; those of the New in Greek; and the authenticity and genuineness of both proved by an amount of evidence that cannot be brought to bear in any other writings of antiquity. But as it would require a separate discourse to enter fully into this part of our subject, we will pass on to notice some additional facts relative to the history of the Bible. "Before the art of printing, (A. D. 1440,) the sacred writings, as also all other books, were preserved only in manuscripts, written on parchment or vellum, prepared from the skins of animals, and usually executed with extreme accuracy and beauty. Many of these manuscripts have come down to us from the fifth or sixth century, and preserved with great purity." Much has been said and written about the number of various readings discovered by biblical critics, in the manuscripts of different languages, which for eight centuries or more had multiplied almost beyond counting; and to this may be added innumerable *apographs*, which, as one might suppose, the art of printing would have wholly superseded. Of the vast amount of these various readings we may form some idea, "from the number discovered by the labors of one biblical scholar, who devoted thirty years of his life mainly to this point—Dr. Mill—who found in the New Testament alone, thirty thousand." Many thousand more since his day (1668) have been discovered; and those that have been

found in collecting various manuscripts of the Old Testament, have risen to many hundred thousand. But what does all this amount to? "nothing more than whether an *i* shall be dotted, or a *t* crossed; or whether the word *honor* shall be spelled with or without *u*;" for we may well say, with one of the most profound scholars, and one of the greatest critics of the learned languages of the time in which he lived, (1740,) that eminent divine, Dr. Richard Bentley: "Put all the multiplied thousand of various readings into the hands of a knave or a fool, and make them as many more, and yet, with the most sinistrous and absurd choice, he shall not extinguish the light of any one chapter, or so disguise Christianity, but that every feature of it will be the same." Indeed, this learned and somewhat curious discovery of so large a number of various readings in the sacred text, has resulted in precluding forever any just ground for cavil and suspicion, since they have been found to be connected *simply* with "letters, accents, commas and stops;" not with points of doctrine or practices of morality, for the very worst manuscript ever consulted, does not contain a single deviation from the original text, which would vitiate, in the slightest degree, any one vital, essential truth; and as such, places the uncorrupted integrity of the Scriptures in a stronger light than ever—"setting the text on a permanent basis, and thereby serving to increase our confidence in its general purity and correctness."

"Originally, there were no *breaks or divisions* of the sacred books into chapters, verses, or even into words, so that anciently a whole line, and even a whole book, was in fact but one continued word. The invention of our present chapters was by Hugo de Sancto Caro, or as more commonly called, Hugo Cardinalis, who flourished about the year 1240. The method of distinguishing the verses by figures, as seen in our Bibles, was introduced into the Old Testament by Atheas, a Jew of Amsterdam, in the year 1661; and the same was effected for the New Testament, by Robert Stephens, a French printer, about the middle of the sixteenth century, while on a journey from Paris to Lyons." Our present version of the Bible was made in the reign and by the authority of James I, king of England, who, in 1604, nominated fifty-four learned men, chiefly professors and divines of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, to whom he committed the business of producing as perfect a translation as possible of the Scriptures, from their original Hebrew and

Greek, into English. Nearly three years were spent in completing the translation, and quite four in preparing the work for the press. It was published in folio in 1611, and has ever since been the version in common use; and we have the best reasons, on the whole, to be satisfied with it. Yea, take it all in all, it is an illustrious monument of the age, the nation, and the language; the noblest, best, most finished classic of the English tongue, and (as remarks a learned commentator*) "not only a standard translation, but the translation is the standard of our language." The original, from which it was taken, is alone superior to the Bible translated by the authority of King James. "Of all modern versions," says Richard Watson, "this is the most faithful and accurate. Its style is simple, harmonious and energetic; use has made it familiar, and time has rendered it sacred." Indeed, we may add, a noble monument of the integrity, fidelity and learning of its venerable translators. Some improvements, some corrections, doubtless, might be made, to render a few passages more clearly expressive of the meaning of the original; but in making even these few and comparatively unimportant improvements, one in so doing might be tempted to proceed further than would in the end prove correct, advantageous, safe. Admitting that we might, here and there, gain a little in point of style, yet, at the same time, how serious to us might be the loss in point of thought, which, after all, is the main object in the translation of any book, and especially so of this book, the full and proper sense of every word of which it behooves us, by every consideration, both of time and eternity, earnestly to seek, secure and retain.

And where, it may be asked, could we expect to find *now*, so faithful a translation as this, which, for two centuries and a half, has withstood the test of the severest criticism, and which multiplied thousands, in reading, have experienced as being the very spirit and soul of God's own words, transmitted through a channel in every respect adequate to convey, in simplicity, dignity and clearness, all the original pathos and energy? Such were the translators, and such the language they employed. No set of men ever acted under a more solemn religious sense of an important duty devolved, than did those in this work, for which, by an *earthly* monarch, they were selected and called; but most evidently by a *heavenly*, fitted, guided and sustained.

* Dr. Adam Clarke.

Truly, it was "God who enabled them to stand, as upon Mount Sinai," and raise up their country's language to the dignity of the original, imbuing it thoroughly with its spirit, and, at the same time, by his own spirit, freeing them (the translators) from all the blinding tendencies, and narrowness, and bitterness of a sectarian spirit; for at that time all protestants were agreed in England on every important point, and then, too, the English language was at the happiest stage of its progress, with all the simplicity and clearness of the older literature; whilst at the same time it was free from the "cant of the age of Charles I and Cromwell, from the vulgarity and levity of that of Charles II, and from the artificial character of that of Anne;" and thus by it our own language is at once enriched and adorned; and therefore, as to all frivolous objections in regard to the present version, we hold, with Sir Thomas Browne, that "if the substantial subject be well forged out, we need not examine the sparks which irregularly fly from it;" or, to change the figure, as adopted by another, "If the edifice is so finely proportioned, that its *architectural effect* impress every beholder, we may well bethink ourselves a little before we undertake to meddle with or to mend it." The Book, as we have it, comes to us from clear heads, pure hearts, and from the "wells of English undefiled." In its first vigor, large, hearty; "with the dew of the early morning upon it, and under the inspiration of the universal awakening of the human intellect," ready for the first essays of its power.

III. The Character of the Scriptures.

1. In a mere literary point of view it is far superior to any human production. Of the simplicity and purity that mark its style, of the originality and grandeur of its sentiments, and of its poetry and eloquence, time forbids that I speak. We could here give, at much length, the recorded judgment of the best critics and finest scholars, from the days of Longinus to the present time, passing the highest eulogiums upon the sacred penmen, merely as authors, without any regard to their being messengers of Heaven, or laying any claims, however just, to a divine inspiration; but I will detain you with only a few brief quotations, and as you will at once recognise from those writers, who, by the splendor of their talents and profound erudition, were eminently qualified to decide on a point like this. Sir William Jones, a distinguished poet, scholar and lawyer, (and

of whom it has been said few such luminaries have ever enlightened the world, or been so renowned for learning, wisdom, taste and imagination,) thus openly and distinctly sets forth his noble testimony:

"I have regularly and attentively read the Bible, and am of opinion that this volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more impartial history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books ever composed in any age."

So likewise Bishop Horne, a learned prelate, whose writings are invariably characterized by deep research, and held in high repute, and as deservedly esteemed by the friends of piety and virtue, thus writes:

"The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands, and lose their fragrancy; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be doubly heightened; fresh odors are emitted, and new sweets extracted from them. He who hath once tasted their excellences will desire to taste them yet again; and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best."

Even J. J. Rousseau made the remarkable observation:

"I will confess to you, further, that the majesty of the Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible are they when compared with Scripture! Is it possible, that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man?"

And the great Joseph Addison, so highly celebrated in English literature, says:

"Let a judge of the beauties of poetry read a literal translation of Horace or Pindar, and he will find in them such obscurity and confusion of style, with such a comparative poverty of imagination, as will make him sensible of the vast superiority of Scripture style."

Longinus, the best critic of the heathen world, speaks of Moses as a superior writer, and cites instances of the true sublime in the Old Testament—so likewise in the New—and ranks St. Paul among the famous orators. Madam Dacier, in the preface to her translation of Homer, assures us that—

"The books of the Prophets and the Psalms, even in the Vulgate, are full

of such passages as the greatest poet in the world could not put into verse, without losing much of their majesty and pathos."

Cowley tells us, that—

"All the books of the Bible are either already most admirable and exalted pieces of poesy, or are the best materials in the world for it."

Blackmore says, that—

"For sense, and for noble and sublime thoughts, the poetical parts of Scripture have an infinite advantage above all others put together."

Prior is of the opinion, that—

"The writings of Solomon afford subjects for finer poems of every kind, than have yet appeared in the Greek, Latin, or any modern language."

Pope assures us, that—

"The pure and noble, the graceful and dignified in simplicity of language, is nowhere in such perfection as in the Scriptures and Homer; and that the whole book of Job—with regard both to sublimity of thought and morality—exceeds beyond all comparison the most noble parts of Homer."

"I have *one book only*," said Collins, a distinguished English poet, (after he had withdrawn from study, and the society of men of letters, and was confining his attention exclusively to the reading of the Bible,) "*but that one is the best.*"

A large volume of like testimony might be given, but we close on this particular part of our subject, with the well known and justly admired, eloquent remarks of the gifted Grimkè, expressed in an oration delivered a few years past, before the *Phi Beta Kappa* Society of one of the colleges of our country:

"In sublimity and beauty, in the descriptive and pathetic, in dignity and simplicity of narrative, in power and comprehensiveness, depth and variety of thought, in purity and elevation of sentiment, the most enthusiastic admirers of the heathen classics have conceded their inferiority to the Scriptures. The Bible, indeed, is the only universal classic, the classic of all mankind, of every age and country, of time and eternity, more humble and simple than the primer of the child, more grand and magnificent than the epic and the oration, the ode and the drama; when genius, with his chariot of fire, and his horses of fire, ascends in whirlwind into the heaven of his own invention. It is the best classic the world has ever seen, the noblest that has ever honored and dignified the language of mortals! If you boast that the Aristotles, and the Platos, and the Tullys of classic ages, 'dipped their pens in intellect,' the sacred authors dipped theirs in inspiration. If those were the 'secretaries of nature,' these were the secretaries

of the very Author of nature. If Greece and Rome have gathered into their cabinet of curiosities the pearls of Heathen poetry and eloquence, the diamonds of pagan history and philosophy, God himself has treasured up in the Scriptures the poetry and eloquence, the philosophy and history of sacred law-givers, of prophets and apostles, of saints, evangelists and martyrs. In vain may you seek for the pure and simple light of universal truth in the Augustan ages of antiquity In the Bible only is the poet's wish fulfilled—

"'And like the sun, be all one boundless eye.'"

If the exhortation, as applied by an eminent author (Pope) to Homer, were applied to this inestimable volume, it would be used with the strictest truthfulness and propriety:

"Read God's word once, and you can read no more,
For all books else appear so mean, so poor,
Verse will seem prose: but still persist to read,
And God's word will be all the books you need."

2. In its general arrangement. "The Bible not only abounds with all the varied beauties of the Greek and Roman classics, and in a much higher degree of perfection, but its arrangement is the most wonderful of all other books in the world. It consists not merely of a collection of chapters and verses, and distinct aphorisms on trivial subjects, as too many are apt to conceive, but, as the learned and pious David Simpson remarks, "One grand epic composition, forming sixty-six books of unequal lengths, and of various importance. As the sun, moon, and planets, have one system, and each of them are necessary to the harmony of the whole, so the different books of the sacred code that are separately considered, and taken out of their course, may appear unimportant; yet, as parts of one large complicated system, they are all necessary, though the time is longer than is usually admitted in compositions of the epic kind. Its beginning is with the birth, and its end with the close of nature itself; yet even this is perfectly consistent with the rest of the adorable plan—a thousand years being with the Lord as one day—and the action of it, too, is one and entire, and the greatest that can be conceived. All the beings of the universe, of which we have any knowledge, are concerned in the drama." The epic opens in a mild, calm sublimity, with the creation of the world itself; and carried on with an astonishing variety of incidents, and unfolded in a language of unparalleled simplicity and majesty, and adorned with episodes, or under-actions, of inconceivable beauty and interest; closing with a scene the most

solemn, grand, and sublime, ever presented by any author, sacred or profane. The human mind can conceive of nothing like it. Indeed it is a complete drama, having a beginning a middle and an end; maintaining throughout a pervading unity; unfolding itself as a perfect organic whole; always consistent with itself; the realization of the idea of one mind, developed by a number of others, like laborers upon some vast edifice, under the direction of the chief architect, working each at the part assigned him, till the building stands forth in all its commanding sublimity and perfection. None but a shallow or malignant objector could complain of the want of order or arrangement in the Bible, since its author has established "order as Heaven's first law." *Method* is divine, and, in the very nature of things, inseparable from the ideas of God and order. *System* (which we must not confound with method) is of man, and is a help to the weakness of his faculties—the artificial contrivance by which he brings within his limited ken that which by no other way he would be able to grasp. Hence a sort of necessity for books of systematic theology. But it is most needful that the Bible be not a book of this kind. Were it so, the Scriptures would be only a skeleton — a worthless residuum—or, as one has it, "a mere herbarium;" a curious collection of withered plants and flowers; a *hortus siccus;* a dry garden, uninviting, desolate—no fresh fragrant flowers growing upon living stalks, with the dew upon their leaves. To illustrate the point, Christ does not declare to a system, and say, "This is truth." So doing, he might have established a school; but he points to a *person—himself.* And thus he founded not *a school,* but *a church*—a fellowship—whose faith stands upon Him who is "the chief corner-stone" of the Temple of Truth. By this mode of interpretation, as applied to all other great truths, facts, and principles of Revelation, viewed in their proper connection, order, and arrangement, we find how "every part, fitly joined together and compacted," is rendered a perfect, organic whole.

When God, who at divers times spoke to the world by his servants, had spoken his last and fullest word then to *this book* there is added no more, since there is nothing more to add; though prophetic vision teaches this is not "the be all," (for "the eye hath not seen," &c.)* the latest, highest, supremest triumph which affects redeemed human-

* I Cor. xi, 9

ity. No, it can only be fully unfolded amidst the splendor and blessedness of a perfected kingdom in heaven. In connection with this idea relative to the general arrangement, order, method, and unity of design as seen in the Scriptures, we would further observe: Vast as is the course which they have traced, it has been a circle still, and in that most perfect form carries us back to the point whence it started "The heaven which had disappeared from the earth since the third chapter of Genesis, reappears in visible manifestation in the latest chapter of Revelation. The 'tree of life,' whereof we have only the faintest reminiscences in all the intermediate time, again stands by the 'river of the water of life,' and again there is no more curse." The *token* of the covenant which God made unto Noah, for perpetual generations, in the first year of the restored earth, reappears with "a mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and a rainbow upon his head;" and yet again we find it fixed and permanent, "about the throne of God, like unto an emerald." The angels that shouted for joy over the new-born earth, reappear with their characteristic songs of praise and triumph, when they announce to the wondering shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, "good tidings of great joy"—the birth of the world's "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And yet again in heaven they are heard saying, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!"

8. Its peculiar adaptation to the human mind, as fitted to satisfy its utmost developments, furnishing a rich and exhaustless material for the exercise of the soundest judgment, the most delicate sensibility of taste, the highest flight of imagination, and the loftiest contemplations of the human intellect; in the meantime eliciting and improving all the best feelings and faculties of the soul. On this point a few hints will suffice. We say that the Bible is adapted to the human mind, and this in all stages of society, and in all advances of the arts and sciences. This cannot be said of any other book. "When we read an ancient book on philosophy or medicine or any other science, we are constantly compelled to encounter positions which modern science has ascertained to be false. Even the works of Lord Bacon cannot be perused without melancholy reflections on his now obvious errors in regard to many of the well-established facts in the physical and the mental sciences. Not so with the Bible. It contradicts none of the discoveries of modern science; but, on the contrary, lends its

light for a more sure, vigorous, and successful investigation, as it shines on the pathway of universal advancement." The same might be said of mental science, the only true system of which will yet be found to have been given in the Divine Word; the entrance of which alone imparteth a light wholly unmixed with darkness to the mind of man; for the simple reason that all mere human theories of mental philosophy have left the operations of the mind in religion almost if not entirely out of view, which must of necessity lead to a cardinal and ultimately destructive defect. The operations of the mind in regard to religion are most clearly detailed in the Scriptures; and as they represent man as he really is, and not what human philosophy would have him to be, we conclude that the Bible on this point furnishes the only true doctrine. With equal truth these remarks might be extended and applied to political science. No other book presents such elevated views of the civil rights of man. The circulation of the Bible has been the most certain mode of diffusing just views of liberty and the nature of civil government. The truth of this may be easily ascertained by opening a map of the world and drawing a line around those regions where the Scriptures have had the most free and extensive circulation. The truth is, the Bible contains the only principles on which true liberty can rest with permanency. This is obvious to every one who knows anything of its spirit or its doctrines. "The Hebrew Commonwealth presents the first example ever witnessed in the world of a Federative Republic, governed by equal and fixed laws, and securing liberty to the subject in the truest and best sense. Neither tyrant nor Pope have been able to chain down the minds of men, or subject their necks to the yoke of oppression, while they had the Scriptures in their hands, and were allowed to read and understand them." The work of subjugation has always been preceded by the locking up the "Word of Life," and taking from the people the "Key of Knowledge." If the liberties of our country are to be preserved, it must be by spreading abroad through the land the spirit and principles of the Bible; and if they are ever destroyed, the first blow will be struck by men who disbelieve and hate the Bible. Yes, "the Bible is the great charter and pledge of civil liberty." That memorable document drawn by our fathers—the Declaration of Independence—is based on that sacred text, "Whatsoever ye would that men," &c. The most eminent men that have adorned the land, in all the departments of its government, have found it to

their honor and advantage to study the Bible; and that the distribution, reading, and *minding it*, will do more to establish national peace than a standing army or a floating navy. It will do more to check crime than all the criminal codes ever devised and employed, and will insure liberty in all her justifiable forms, more than constitution and statutes, though these are necessary for a nation's welfare, but would be insecure unless sanctioned by the authority of the Bible. How many past governments stand out to view as monuments of the instability of nations without the Bible! In the language of another, we would here say: "Had the vale of Tempe, in ancient Greece, been the garden of Gethsemane; had Olympus been Calvary, and had the ambiguous responses of the Delphic Oracle been the sure testimony of the Word of God—then had not the swaddling clothes that wrapped her infant Liberty so soon have proved its winding sheet! From whom did our illustrious ancestors imbibe the spirit that led them valorously to resist the encroachments of oppression—disqualified them to be slaves—but from the Bible? The Bible was to WASHINGTON, the leader of their forces, as he bound it to his heart, like the breastplate that indicated to the high priest when Israel should war, and gave signs of God's approval. It was the ark of the covenant, leading out an injured people to victory."

And not only to civil but religious liberty. Though every country of the world, with all their resources, be employed; though every Jesuitical effort combine to seat "the man of sin" upon the throne of our Government; so long as we be faithful to God we need not fear, for we have a weapon by which all the efforts of opposing foes shall be foiled. As easily may darkness cover the land when the sun is in its unclouded zenith, as for Romanism or Infidelity to triumph, when the Bible is abroad in the land. Like Dagon before the ark, all its enemies shall fall and perish, and not a vestige remain to tell of their former insolence and vain boastings of power. With gratitude to God we should acknowledge our indebtedness to the Word of Revelation for the establishment of genuine liberty. The tree beneath whose ample shade we have reposed,(and by whose fairest fruit we have been fed,)was planted by God himself, and owes its growth, elevation, and grandeur, to the benign and fostering influences of that truth which he has made known to us through the Word of his Power.

And with political freedom (the greatest glory of a people—aye,

Heaven's choice prerogative; true bond of law; social soul of property; breath of reason; life of life itself; earth's richest blessing—cheap, though purchased with our blood; pure, celestial boon, revealed of God, and by him freely given) we blend the social and domestic relations, while, in connection with liberty and its numerous attendant blessings, we have a complete round of all the sweet endearments of life. And bright beyond comparison, in this respect, is "the beautiful land of our birth—the home of the homeless all over the earth;" the divinely-honored abode of joy and peace and harmony and plenty; where supporting and supported, friends and dear relations, with strangers, welcomed, mingle high thoughts and smiles akin to those when from the genial cradle of our race went forth the tribes of men with hands and hearts ever open, gentle, kind. All that is connected *with the name of father, child, husband, wife, master, servant, friend, guest,* "the *stranger* that is within thy gates," is derived from the things which God has graciously made known to man. And not only is it adapted to the human mind, in a way to secure to us all those blessings, social, political, and domestic, which so elevate and adorn the race of man, but "the Bible also strengthens as well as greatly enlarges the human intellect. It does this, *even when it does not change the heart.* It has a tendency to ennoble and refine, where it does not save. There is nothing so likely to elevate and endue with new vigor our faculties, as to bring them in contact with stupendous truths, and the setting them to grasp and measure those truths.* This it does not merely by its rich imagery, exquisite poetry, and clear history, but because it brings truth to the mind, such as He who formed the mind knew that it would need. When God comes in contact with the human soul he enlarges its power. The baptism of Pentecost reaches the mind as well as the heart. Who can doubt that in the presence of God in heaven the intellect grows in strength simply because it is brought into contact with the great mind of the universe? *There,* God teaches without the medium of the Bible; *here,* with it: in both cases God dealing with the intellect." The faintest beam from the star of Bethlehem is brighter than the strongest light philosophy ever held up to the world of mankind. And this, too, we know, *will ever be free to us,* and shed an increasing brightness on the path of successive generations, as long as the sun endures. For thus saith

* Psal. cxix, 130, "The entrance of," &c

the Lord, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." In assurance of this, John* beheld "an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people," and shall thus "fly and preach" until the world shall be filled with the "brightness of the Lord's glory"—a "light," indeed, "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day!" Hence we conclude that the Bible is

4. *Inexhaustible.* "Other books teach through the eye, and I may take from the page all that the author has put there, and perhaps even more, because I may have trains of thoughts suggested which he never had; but opening the Book of God I open what is inexhaustible; first, because the mind that created its pages is infinite, and has embodied its own emotions there; and, secondly, because the spirit of God is ever present to aid the reader of the Scriptures." "Am I an illiterate man?" I take up Aristotle or Locke or Bacon, or some other of the kind, and am perhaps in some point as dark at the close as when I began the book, while, if an humble reader of the Bible, I understand plans which embrace everlasting ages, and the eternal destiny of myriads of created beings. From the Bible there goes forth a mysterious light, and in that light I see the Infinite One—"high and lifted up"—and as he sits upon the throne of the universe, his eternal mind designs and completes the sublime scheme of love and power which is recorded in the sacred page—"a page where triumphs immortality; a page which not the whole creation could produce, which not the conflagration shall destroy. In nature's ruins, not one letter lost; 'tis printed in the mind of God forever."

You may walk amid the columns of the most glorious porticoes and listen to the "stoics' fond pretence," the philosophic lore of Athens, but the charm is broken, the light eclipsed by truth's resistless blaze. The glory of the once illustrious Parthenon is gone, and no longer wins the praise of wondering Greece. You may gaze upon the fairest landscape, and revel amid the boundless store

> "Of charms which nature to her votary yields,
> The warbling woodland—the resounding shore,
> The pomp of groves and garniture of fields,

* Rev. xiv, 6.

All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of Heaven."

These are created and limited. The soul is immortal, and wants something more. The soul is a native of the sky, and would pine with pale decay if condemned to dwell on thoughts and scenes confined to earth. From such it turns disdainfully, to an equal good; with eye of fire and wings of light, it seeks through all the ascent of things to enlarge her view, till every finite object at length shall disappear, and infinite perfection close the scene.

5. It is *tireless*. "You may load your shelves with the volumes of eloquence, with the research of science, narrations of history, lofty aspirations of poetry, but the time comes when these titles and pages and contents become an old story. You take down the volume without interest and replace it without regret. Not so with the Bible. It *does not tire*, like the toys of earth." It is an emanation of the infinite mind, and is for the greatest minds, and yet so adapted to the weakest as to delight and charm by its wonderful simplicity and variety. It can bear to be looked at in its largest aspect as in its smallest details. Here truly are "*maxima in minimis.*" The sun reflecting itself as faithfully in the tiny dew-drop as in the great mirror of the ocean. How do they shine like finely polished diamonds! How simple, and yet how deep! How beautiful, and yet how amazingly grand and sublime! Every one can get something from them, and yet no one can get all. "He that gathers little has enough, and he that gathers much has nothing over." Every one there gathers according to his eating. Who sees not in the Scriptures of God that the keys of heaven and hell are put into his hands, and yet in this widest wealth are laid up thoughts in narrowest compass? Who will venture to affirm that he has come to their end, that he has dived into all their deeps, or that he expects to do so? Even the skeptic Bayle was compelled to call them "an abridgment of all human history," and as such setting us at the very centre of the moral oscillation of the world. Nor is it only what Scripture says, but its very silence is instructive. More so, indeed, than the speech of other books; so that it has been likened to "a dial in which the shadow as well as the light informs us"—so that we can never tire for the want of proper materials; for fresh interest and new delight

continually reward, as we read and re-read, time and again, with glimpses unperceived before, of the strange, beautiful, grand, sublime and manifold relations in which the visible and invisible stand to one another in the sacred pages.

Thus, brethren, have I endeavored to present to you a few of the aspects under which the subject of our text may be contemplated as fitted to provoke, and even more, to reward our inquiries. Could I have known how to condense within the ordinary limits of a single discourse, all connected with the subject that is needful and proper to introduce, I should not have left it so far unfinished as a whole, and so imperfectly executed even those separate and particular points which I have endeavored to discuss. I should have been pleased to have unfolded and closed the subject according to the plan I had designed, viz:

I, II, III. As already treated, and then as follows:
IV. Contents of the Scriptures, &c.
V. Inspiration of, &c.
VI. Arguments for its truth, &c.
VII. Guilt of neglecting, &c.
VIII. Man's condition without, &c.
IX. Prospects of final triumph, &c.
X. The reading, study, practice, &c., recommended, urged, &c.

All of which (the remaining seven) presented and discussed even as briefly and imperfectly as the three points already noticed, would require at least two additional discourses of equal, if not indeed greater length than the one here offered for your consideration. The subject, however, is with you, and must stand (so far as we are concerned, at least on this occasion) in the unfinished form in which we leave it, but for which it does not become us perhaps either to express any regret or offer any apology, since by so doing, we might seem unmindful of a truth universally admitted, and for the elucidation of which we devoted the opening remarks of our present discourse, *i. e.*, the utter impossibility of expressing fully by speech or written words *all* the pre-eminently excellent, beautiful, grand, glorious and sublime things which the Scriptures alone, of all other productions, claim for themselves. For such a task, all men and all angels combined, would be found inadequate, and that too (it may be) though aided by the ever encircling light and perpetually aug-

menting facilities of eternity; for God only can the mind of God fully fathom. And what are the Scriptures but the transcript of the Divine mind? Here and there ocean-depths which no line can measure; or mountain height transcending the reach of finite gaze; "pinnacled in clouds sublime; throned in eternity."

On such a theme (without hyperbole) the world itself could not contain the books that might be written; for if fully presented, it must necessarily embrace all the hidden purposes and emotions, as well as the manifold disclosures of infinite love, infinite wisdom, and infinite power, as connected with man's redemption, to say nothing of the work of creation, and the schemes of Providence, so inconceivably vast in their design, interminable in their range, and endless in their operations and results. Yea, only to write *the love of God to man*,

> "Would drain an ocean dry,
> Nor would a scroll contain the plan,
> Tho' stretched from sky to sky."

So, then, to the loving and earnest seeker of divine truth, the Scriptures will ever be making new and continually enlarging discoveries in their heavenly doctrines; and thus to him what seemed at first but a light vaporous cloud, will, upon a closer gaze, to his armed eye resolve itself into a world of stars. The further he advances the more will he be aware that what lies before him is far more than what lies behind; the readier will he be to take up the hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and wonder, with the Apostle, at the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, which are displayed at once in his works and in his word, but far more in his word than in his works. Hence saith David, "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth, for thou hast magnified *thy word above all thy name*," preferring *faithfulness to its promises*, to the attributes of infinite power and wisdom wherein Jehovah has proved himself ineffably great. Verily, oh God, thy word is truth, firmly rooted in the attributes of all thy name, and will endure forever. Its birth is divine, its destiny eternal. It cannot be extinguished, for God is its light. It cannot die, for God is its life. Thrones may totter, and powerful sceptres be shivered, "but the word of our God shall stand forever." By divine power has it been borne over the storms of ages and sheltered amid the wreck of nations and of systems. It has

bid defiance to the political, religious and intellectual convulsions of three thousand years. It has laughed at the impotent rage of its enemies of every age, and name, and dye. "The power of kings, the pride of nobles, the prejudices of priests, and whatever learning could snatch from the arsenals of the past, or wit invent, or wickedness wield, have been hurled against it, and all have recoiled broken, and lie as trophies at its feet. It has successfully resisted the persecution of kings and conquerors. It has sustained the burden of many centuries, and survived the shock of many a disaster." In every conflict it has triumphed, and all who have dared to assail it have perished from the earth in deserved discomfiture. By the breath of its power it has dissipated the mists of error, as from time to time they have risen up in the form of Essays on the Miracles. Ages of Reason, Theories of Creation, of the Races, &c. Yes, it has defied the sophisms of Hume, the eloquence of Gibbon, the vituperations of Voltaire, the innuendoes of Rousseau, the blasphemies of Paine, the terrible atheism of Hobbes and his immediate pupils, the pantheism of Spinosa, the worse than heathenish philosophy of Shaftesbury, the deeply impure and blighting immorality of Bolingbroke, the strange, monstrous, and ridiculous theories of Kant, the dreamy and bootless idealism of Fitch, the vague absolutism of Schelling, the childish entities of Kezel, the quibbling, contradictory infidelity of Strauss, and a thousand more of every class of "isms," which, in their sad delusions and wild perversions of a system which claims to be Christian, are as truly and as fearfully opposed to the principles of the Bible as the arch enemy himself might desire, who would "have all men to believe a lie that they may be damned." Though in theory they teach with divers tongues, and charm with a thousand artful plausibilities, yet they all practically destroy the same hopes, and inflict the same ruin—quenching the only torch of truth which throws its rays upon the gloom which broods so heavily over this fallen creation. Yet blessed be God! in despite of all those wide-spread, multiform, injurious, fatal systems of unbelief; in despite of all the direct, malicious assaults of desperately wicked men and devils; in despite of all the earthly tempests that have beaten upon it, the word of our God still remains, the strong defence of the truth, the frontier bulwark of the Church, and the noblest and most precious boon which heaven has bestowed on this, our apostate and orphaned world, which is its great mission-

ary field, and whose nations are its pupils. And in its august train, science and art, commerce and agriculture, delight to follow, while the demons of war fly appalled at its approach, amid the acclamations of redeemed millions, made joyful by its divine teachings.

To this end—securing the best interests of man for time and eternity—God first gave it; and from its earliest career to the present moment he has guarded, watched over, and preserved it, as the authorized herald and organ of his divine will. "The final conflagration of the earth may destroy the material depository of its truths, but the truths themselves will survive in the records of heaven, mirrored in the mind of the great I AM, engraved on the hearts of the redeemed, and will become the eternally revered text-book of the children of God." Here, then, brethren, stand ye fast, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against you. On this moveless, everabiding rock we may plant our feet, and upon it we may wage the last mortal struggle with the embattling hosts of error; and, if need be, there would we fall, and there only. We need not fear. This mighty tower of our God, round whose base the angry waters rage and foam and fret, shall ever stand, calmly and strongly secure. We may hear again, as indeed we have often heard, from the ranks of the enemy, premature hymns of an imaginary triumph, but let us ever, my brethren, resort to this impregnable fortress of our defence, and make it a sanctuary till all the calamities of life beqoverpast, which surely and shortly they will; and especially let us ever have at hand, that immediate syllogism of the heart, against which no argument is good—that is, ever to be able to say, "These words, we have them to be words of healing, words of comfort and joy." This is our sole security: to have tasted the good word of God, to have known the powers of the world to come. And what if theology may not be able, on the instant, to solve every difficulty, yet faith will not therefore abandon one jot or tittle of that which she holds, for she has it on another and a surer tenure—she holds it directly from her God, "the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit" that verily they are the words, the entrance of which giveth and revealeth to the renewed soul, with divine power and distinctness, the blessed truth that in them we "have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me"—of Christ, the anointed, the "sent of God," full of grace and truth, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge —"the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must

be saved;" the name of Jesus, at which every knee must bow that is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and which every tongue must confess to the glory of God the Father—the image of the invisible God, by whom were all things created*—whose words are spirit and life, and whom to know is eternal life, since he is the author of eternal salvation. In a word, the truth is in Jesus, and he is all and in all. Out of Christ, not only is God a consuming fire, but the great truths of creation and providence become confused and perplexed, and shrouded in vague conjecture. When, however, we fix our mind on the great fact that all things were created by Christ, and for Christ, and that he upholds all things by the word of his power, making known thereby the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose, we learn, and not till then, that the gorgeous structure of materialism spreading itself interminably above us and around us, that suns and planets, angels and men, serve but to constitute one vast apparatus for effecting a mighty enthronement of Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, from every field of immensity, crowded with admiring spectators, there rolls in the ecstatic acknowledgment, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb."

Yes, it is unequivocally proved, by sundry declarations of the Scriptures, that each star, each system, each human, each celestial being, fills some place in a mechanism which is working out the noble result of the coronation of Christ as Lord of all; and, as such, he is all and in all. Every part of the Scriptures is inlaid with Christ—the historical, prophetic, promissory, ceremonial, doctrinal, and practical. Remove Him, and we are at once "without God and without hope in the world"—no sun, no star, to shine forth in the moral firmament, to guide and enlighten the lost and benighted of earth in their sad, dark pilgrimage in search of rest in some peaceful abode. Blessed be God, we have a sun in the spiritual heavens, and of such glorious and redundant brightness that no mirror is large enough to take in all his beams—the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed be God, we have a star, which twinkles with undimmed lustre in the world's moral night, and which, if faithfully observed, will avail to lead humble and devout hearts from far-off regions of superstition and error, till, kneeling as the eastern sages, beside the babe in the manger, they will see all their weary wanderings repaid in a moment, and all their desires finding a perfect fulfilment in Him—the Star of Bethlehem.

* Col. i, 16.

Search, then, the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of that radiant sun, that brilliant star, that clear, true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world:

> "For like the dawn, its cheering rays
> On rich and poor are seen to fall,
> Inspiring their Redeemer's praise
> In lowly cot and lordly hall."

Again, let all search the Scriptures; search them deeply, closely, thoroughly, constantly, faithfully, honestly, unweariedly, earnestly, prayerfully; yea, dig into them, scrutinize them, sift them, and weigh their import, accurately comparing Scripture with Scripture: the best and truest method, the simplest and surest exponent of its own revelation. In a word, read, read the Scriptures, till you love to read, and pray over them till you love to pray; and thus continue to read and pray, never resting till you have imbibed their spirit into the very frame and constitution of your soul, and with their spirit transcribed the precepts and examples of Jesus into every part of your daily walk in life. ere I giving my last advice, in death's fearful hour, to the dearest friend I have on earth, it would be, "Read your Bible." So said Dr. Johnson to his friend Joshua Reynolds; and so sings Dr. Young,

> "Read your Bible and be gay;
> There truths abound, of sovereign aid to peace.
> Ah, do not prize it less because inspired,"

but indeed on that account prize it the more; and if on thy soul, as thou dost read, a ray of purer light break in, give it full scope; admitted, it will break the clouds which long have dimmed thy sight, and lead thee till at last convictions, like the sun's meridian beams, illuminate thy mind. "Prize it, as an immortal being, for it guides to the New Jerusalem; prize it, as an intellectual being, for it giveth understanding to the simple; prize it, as the only perfect standard of truth known among men, and which nothing else can supersede or substitute; before whose majesty science must bow, councils fall, and fathers veil their heads, and one text of which outweighs all the opinions and traditions of all Christendom." Prize it, as that which was written for our learning, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that we, through patience and comfort thereof, might have hope, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Prize it, as that which alone has the power of awakening intense moral feelings in man, under every variety of character—learned or ignorant, civilized or

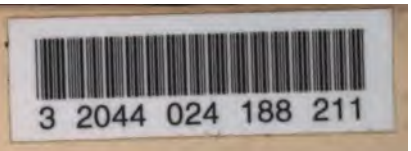
savage—of making bad men good; and of sending a pulse of healthful feeling through all the domestic, civil and social relations. Prize it, as it will teach you to aspire after a conformity to a Being of infinite holiness, and fill you with desires and emotions and hopes infinitely more purifying, more exalted, better suited to thy nature than aught else this world has ever known, and which, in the last mortal conflict, will enable you to say, as did a distinguished saint of holy memory, "The Bible has done more for me than all the men on earth or angels in heaven could do."

"Oh! precious Bible, we could forever enlarge on thy praise. Read it, ye mourners in Zion, it will wipe away your tears. Read it, ye bereaved, it will assure you that "a father of the fatherless, and a husband of the widow, is God in his holy habitation." Read it, ye poor, it will soothe you under your privations. Read it, ye rich, it will sanctify your abundance. Read it, ye old, it will support your tottering age. Read it, ye young, it will preserve your giddy steps, and save you from many dangers, seen and unseen." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word." Then, my young friend, bind it about thy neck; write it upon the table of thine heart; so that, when thou goest, it shall lead thee; where thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is a light; and length of days, and peace, and favor in the sight of God and man, shall it add to thee. "More to be desired is it than gold, yea, than much fine gold; more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto it."* Yea, it is all-important, all-essential; our standard, our rule, our medicine, our shield, our sword, our bread, our water, our sun; the charter of our everlasting privilege; our support in life, our comfort in death, our light in the grave, revealing amidst its gloomy desolations, Him who is the "resurrection and the life," and thence shedding its far-extending radiance upon the scenes and triumphs of the spirit-home of the blessed above. Who can tell what it has done for individuals, for communities, for nations? Who can tell what it will do in the ages to come? Let us quote it as authority in all matters of doubt and of disputation. Let us bless God, that he has placed it in our hands. Let us conscientiously follow its wise counsels in all our works and ways. Let us be thankful for a ministry which explains and applies it with

* Psalm xix, 129.

fidelity, and let us so bring our hearts along with it, as to strain every nerve, pour out unceasing earnest prayer, and be lavish with our silver and our gold, until the tidings which have made us glad shall have echoed on every mountain and on every plain, by the oceans and the rivers, over the islands of the sea, in the frozen north, and the fruitful valleys of the sunny south, until every homestead and habitation of man throughout the whole earth shall be cheered and brightened by God's own word, diffusing richly, righteousness, and holiness, and peace, and joy, and gladness. Then the Bible will be seen and felt to be the best gift of God to a guilty world; the mighty lever for upheaving the long deeply imbedded massive systems of idolatry, and every false religion; aye, the divinely appointed agent of earth's moral renovation, and of man's deliverance from the dominion of sin and the wrath to come Ah, brethren! we are swiftly passing away; the world recedes and disappears, but our eyes being opened by this Word of Light, we behold the glories of our heavenly inheritance. The promises of the Word, which are faithful and true, remove our fears, and enable us to meet our last enemy with Christian courage. With this lamp and light we will pass safely through the dark vale of death, and then with triumph enter into the promised rest. Looking and hastening (as we trust) unto this great reward, let us set a proper estimate on this Blessed Word of Life. Let us esteem it, like Job, "as more than our necessary food;" or, like David, "sweeter than honey to the mouth:" and like him, rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoils; yea, as he, seven times a day praising God because of his testimonies, which he loved exceedingly, they being his constant delight and counsellors. Or say, like the great and pious Boyle, "I prefer a sprig of this tree of life, to a whole wood of bays."

Exerting thus its power, going on conquering and to conquer, it shall never cease in its career, until it shall have triumphed, ultimately and completely, over all opposition; never until it shall have extended its dominion throughout the world, and having engaged the general assent of mankind to its truth, and itself installed in the place of undisputed authority, shall become the rule of every man's faith and the guide of every man's life; then, shall every man, binding it to his heart, be seen bowing before the God of the Bible, and singing in concert with all the dwellers of earth, "Alleluia, Salvation! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"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